



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

AL 3664.5.22

Bound

JAN 1898

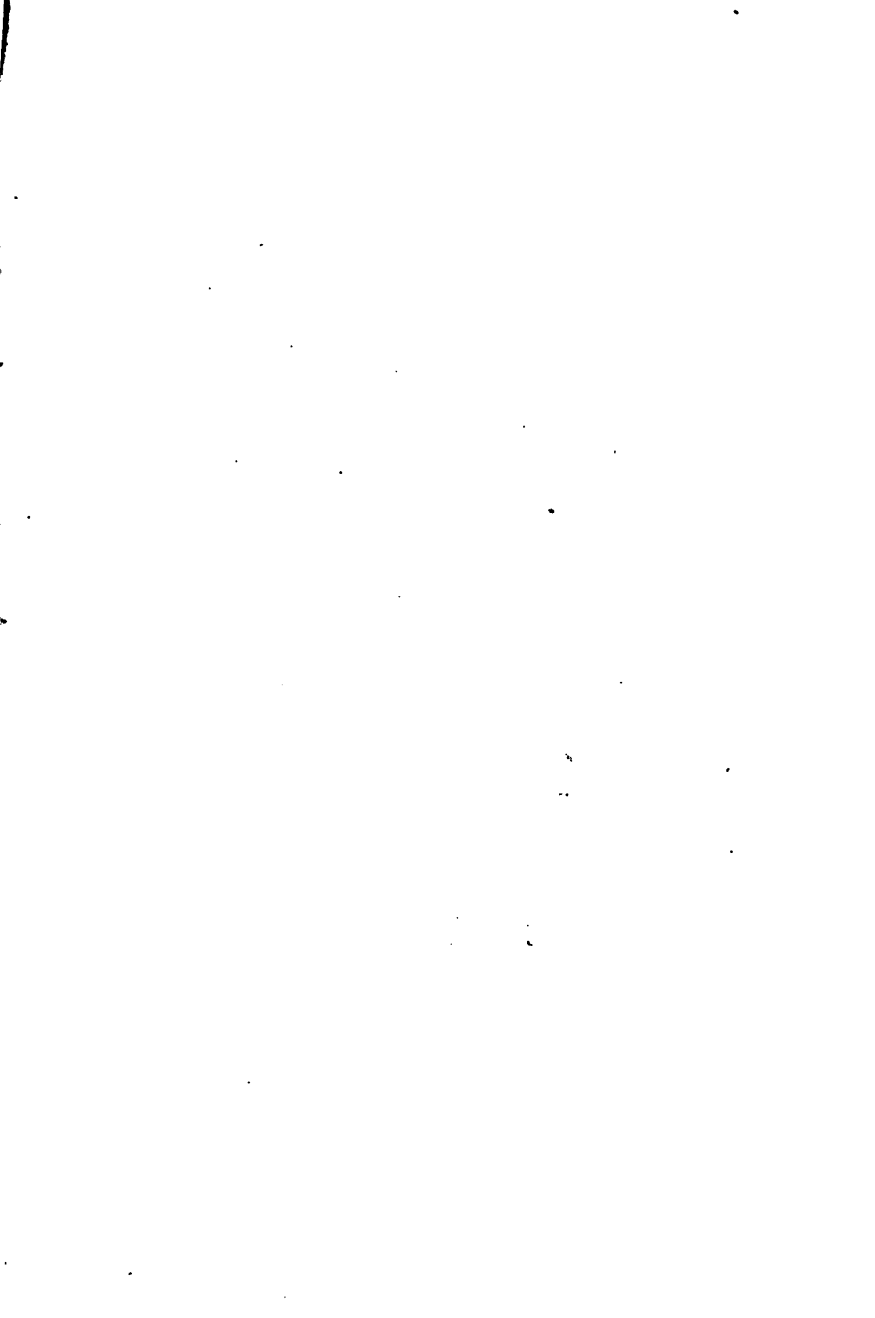


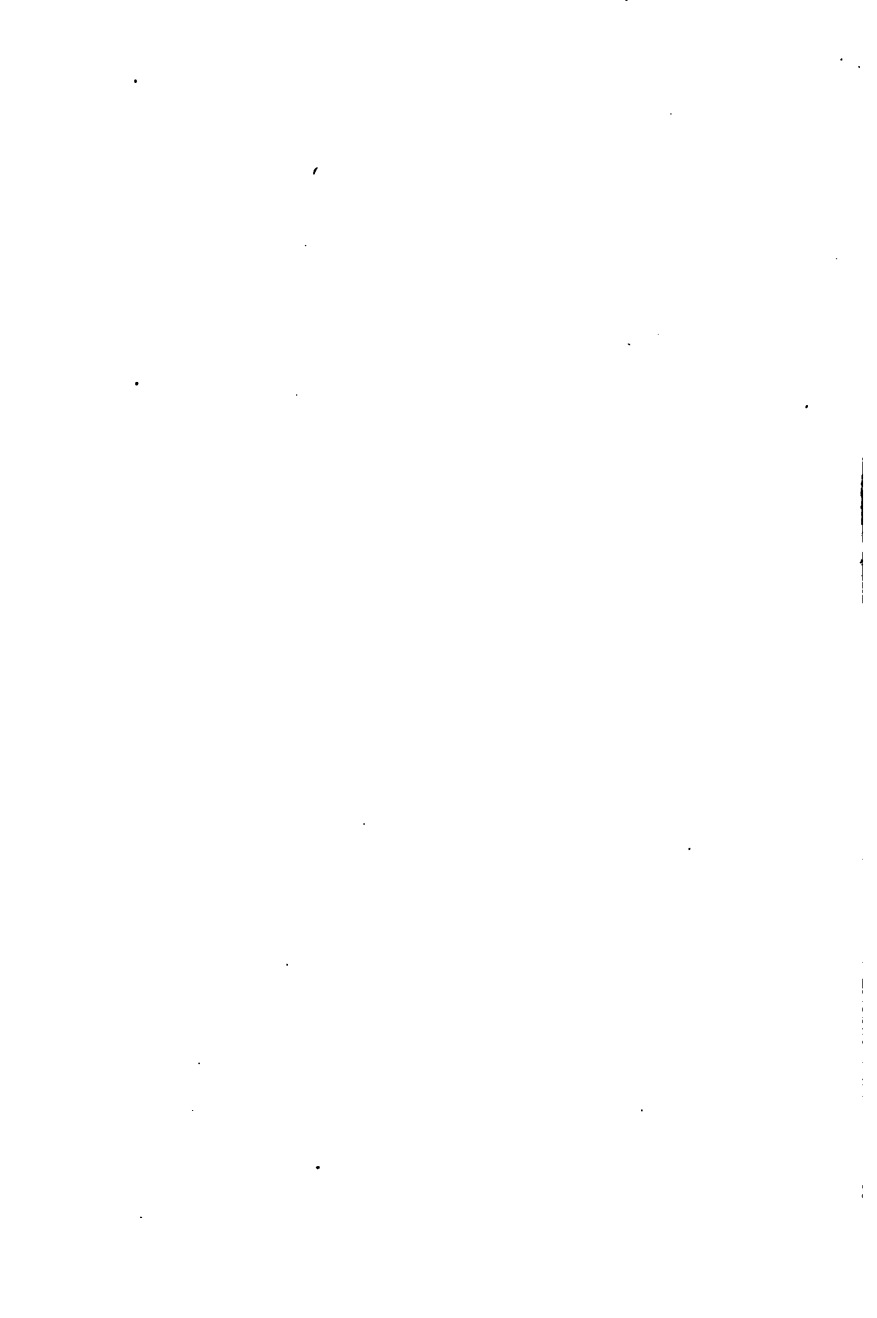
Harvard College Library

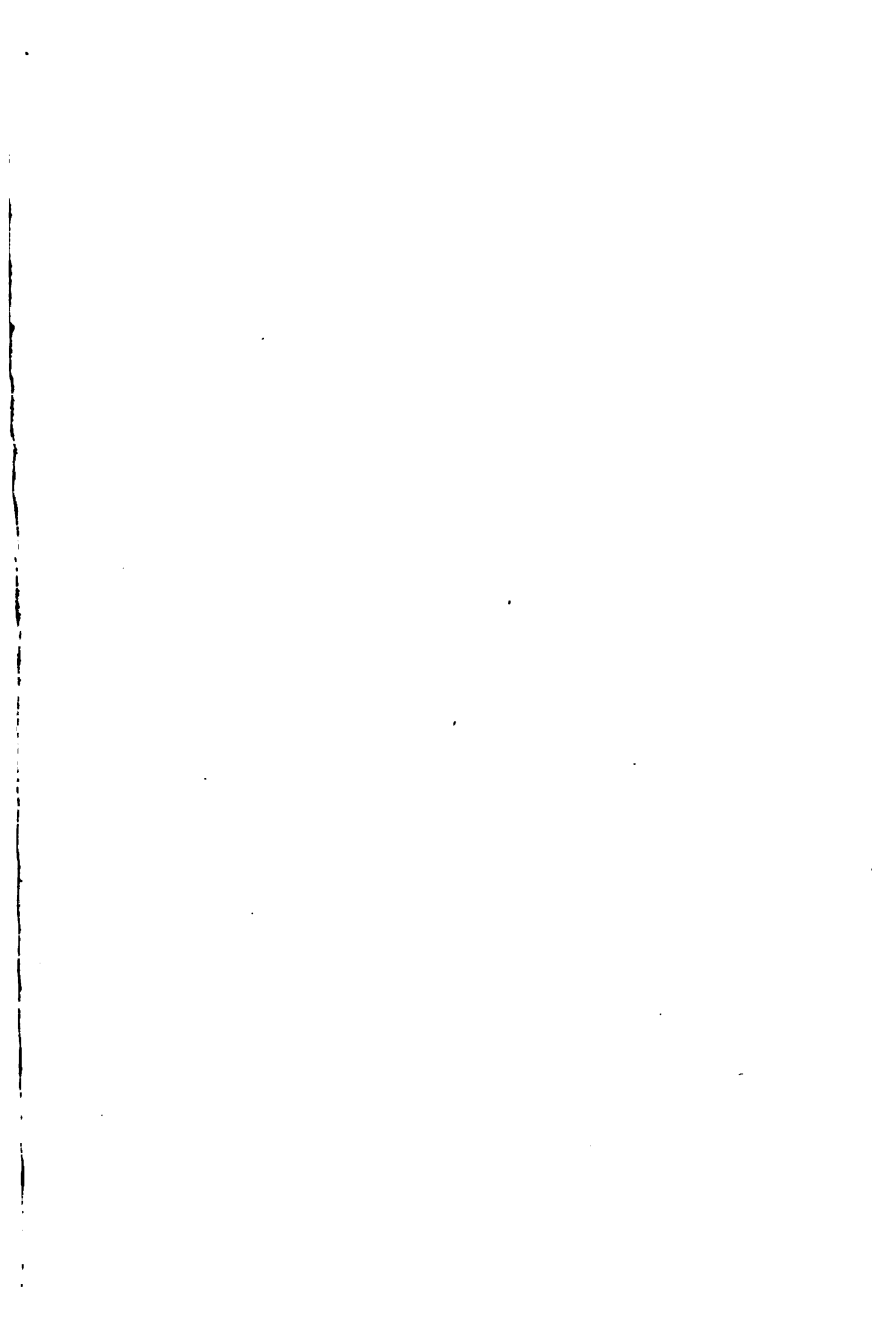
FROM

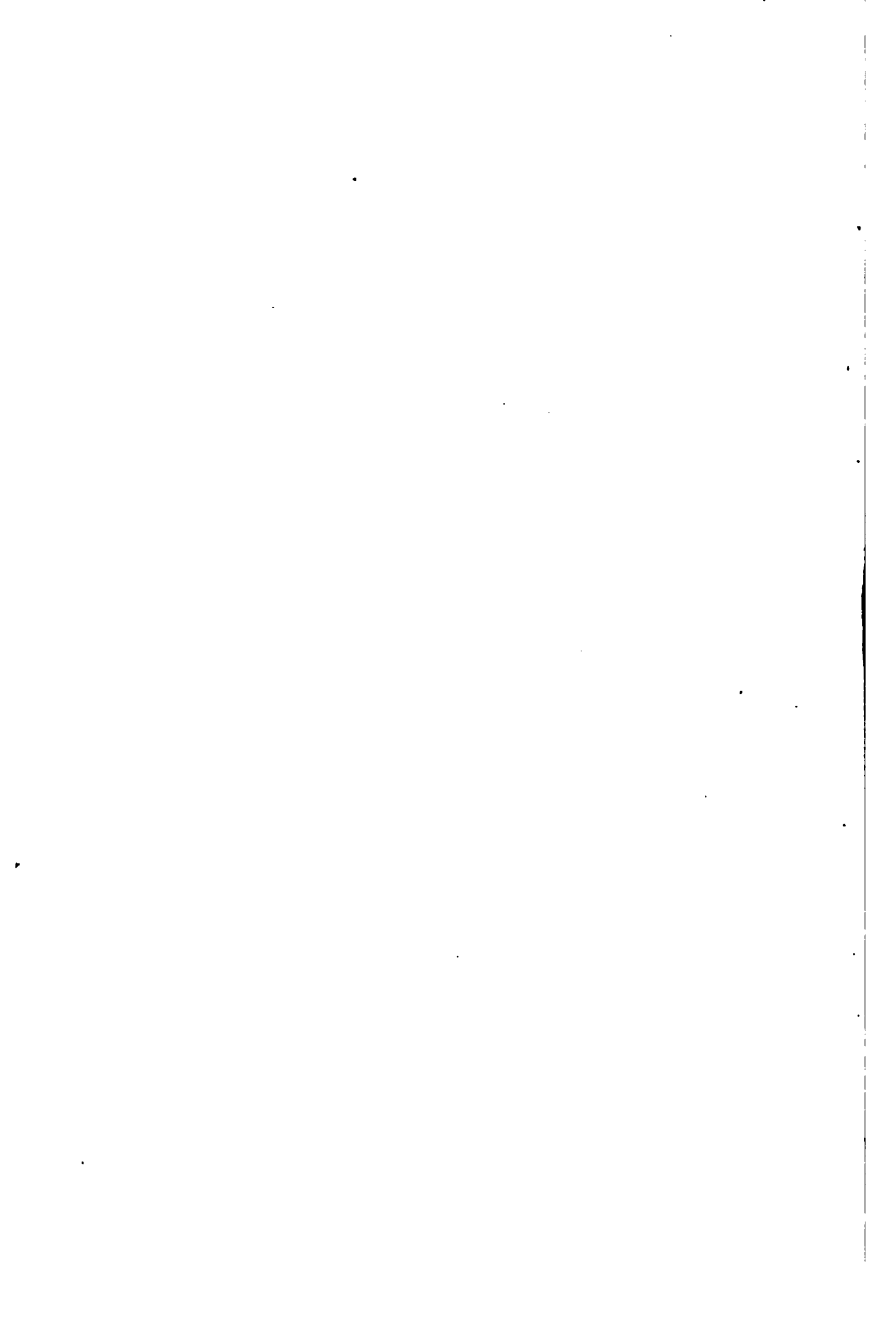
Edw. G. Anglin.

13 Dec. 1897









HL 3664.5.22.

Crash

BUTTON'S INN.

*It might be only on enchanted ground;
It might be merely by a thought's expansion;
But in the spirit, or the flesh, I found
An old deserted mansion.*

HOOD.

BUTTON'S INN.

BY
W. L. G.
ALBION W. TOURGEE,

AUTHOR OF "A FOOL'S ERRAND," "HOT FLOWSHARES," ETC.



BOSTON:
ROBERTS BROTHERS.

1897.

792
61

Ad 3664.5.22



San. Sch. Lib.
Cambridge.

Copyright, 1886,
BY W. H. BUSBEY.

Copyright, 1887,
BY E. K. TOURGEE.

—
All rights reserved.

University Press:
JOHN WILSON AND SON, CAMBRIDGE.

P R E F A C E.

IN this volume only the name and situation of the original **BUTTON'S INN** have been retained. The traditions of descent and nomenclature are partly borrowed and partly fanciful. Whether the *Basse à loin* at which the French explorer was commanded to land his forces was the site of Barcelona, and whether that name was derived therefrom, is not now ascertainable. The real tragedy of Button's Inn was quite unlike the one herein attributed to it, and the ghost which it was said once haunted its ruins is no doubt quite as imaginary a creature as the one I have chosen to delineate.

The good people to whom the supersedure of the ancient highway brought misfortune were not in any way connected with the establishment of the new religion, so far as I know ; but the life of this region in which the story is located, during the later years of the Inn, was precisely that from which Mormonism sprang. Two of its early leaders — one an Apostle — went from this county. Tradition imputes to one of them suspicion of a mysterious crime. The self-accusing impulse

attributed to the Apostle is borrowed from the judicial annals of another State, and is a curious incident of the early history of "the New Dispensation."

Without regard to what Mormonism now is, I have endeavored to depict it as it was then regarded, both by those who came in contact with it and the "Saints" themselves. It was a curious product of a strange religious and intellectual development. As a child I have a vivid recollection of the Temple at Kirtland, Ohio, before it was dismantled. The accounts which are accessible of the manner and appearance of the Prophet Joseph Smith are singularly conflicting. I have followed one given by an eye-witness, from whose narrative the scene in the Temple is chiefly drawn. There is no doubt that there was a certain Oriental warmth of fancy about the founder of the Mormon faith which was entirely lacking in the bleak, frigid, matter-of-fact nature of his successor. The ceremonies, which according to report were at the outset impressive and poetical in character, so far as they are revealed to the eyes of the Gentile are now barren and unimpressive to the very verge of the ludicrous; there is reason to believe that the secret rites of the Endowment House are about equally horrible and grotesque. Brigham Young was no doubt a much greater man than Joseph Smith; but the latter was unquestionably a poet, as every founder of a new faith must be, while his successor was utterly devoid of

imaginative power. The whole movement was purely American in character, — the American orientalized by Christian tradition. Almost all its early membership was drawn from western New York, northern Ohio, and Vermont, from which latter State have come the majority of its leaders. This fact is no doubt the primary cause of the attention of the senator from that State being specially directed to the evils arising from this peculiar religious fantasy. In 1836 Smith declared that there were less than fifty foreigners in the sect, while one who travelled with the main body on its famous Western march, after the fall of Nauvoo, said: "To pass along the line of wagons, listen to the conversation, and hear the hymns and prayers of the emigrants, one would think he had fallen in with a caravan of New England crusaders crossing the desert on their way to conquer the Holy Sepulchre from the Infidels."

Intimate association with one of the early disciples, and the acquaintance of some very intelligent believers in this curious faith have given me a strong interest in its origin and the philosophy of its evolution from the religious life of that day. This evolution I have sought to indicate, rather than laboriously to trace.

It was long an agricultural problem — perhaps it still is with some few tillers of the soil — whether cheat or chess came from deteriorated wheat or not. One thing was accounted certain, — chess grew only where wheat had been sown. Whether Mormonism

is the chess of the religious life of the first half of the present century or not, it is certain that faith in Moroni's revelations sprang up in the shadow of a peculiar Christian idealism, which especially abounded in the region where the story is laid, giving to different lives a varying color, according to the nature of each. The elder characters herein portrayed are contrasted types of the life which was largely shaped by this influence ; Dewstowe, Ozro, and Dotty, of that resulting life in which material interests have subordinated and in great measure superseded religious speculation. My purpose has been faithfully to depict the life which marked the period in which these epochs met and overlapped, — when the one was setting and the other rising in our Western world. The episode of the pin-making machine has been regarded as fanciful, but a well known family in this region long treasured the model herein described as a relic of the inventive genius of one of its most gifted members.

A. W. T.

MAYVILLE, N. Y.,

June 28, 1887

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
"A JOLLY PLACE IN TIMES OF OLD"	1
A FAIR YOUNG MISTRESS	18
A REGULAR BOARDER	29
A VACANT CHAMBER	57
ONCE FOR ALL	78
A KNIGHT OF THE ROAD	91
A COMMERCIAL VIEW	118
A MODERN EPHEBUS	140
A "SENSIBLE AND TRUE AVOUCH"	165
"ASHES TO ASHES"	177
ON THE VERGE OF DESTINY	200
THE BENISON OF PEACE	212
AFTER MANY DAYS	233
A MISSION OF MERCY	257
BLOTTED OUT	265
A SUDDEN START	274

	PAGE
YESTERDAY'S WOE	287
FULFILLING LOVE'S COMMANDMENT	305
THE SHADOW OF CRIME	315
IN THE NEW JERUSALEM.	335
THE VOICE OF THE PROPHET	345
UNEXPECTED RESULTS	357
A FUTILE QUEST	365
AWAKENED JUSTICE	375
PARTITION AND PARTNERSHIP	386
SAINTS AND SINNERS	394
SOUL SCOT.	402
A WEAVER'S KNOT.	410
THE WORLD'S MUTATION	415

BUTTON'S INN.

"A JOLLY PLACE IN TIMES OF OLD."

BUTTON'S INN stood,—let me not say stands, since all that the name imports has disappeared, and the wayfarer now can scarcely trace the footprints of its departed glory,—Button's Inn, while it was yet an inn, stood on a little shelf in the line of verdant hills that stretches along the southern shore of one of our great lakes. Three miles away, and five hundred feet below its mudsill, was the harbor to which the road led that ran by its door. Winding along the slope in search of easy grades, the highway nearly doubled the distance before it crept down the last gentle declivity and spread itself out upon the white shell-laden sands of the beach. Back of it rose a soft green hillside, moulded into harmonious curves by the wave-action of ages when "the waters

covered the face of the earth." At its very crest the hill was cloven by a yawning gorge, whose sides fell sheerly down to the level of a dashing stream that sped along its slippery bed a hundred feet below. Here ran one branch of an impetuous rivulet, that rising half a score of miles from the lake fought its way with devious windings through a thousand feet of hindering shale, down to the level of the sparkling lake. From source to mouth there was hardly a hundred yards of quiet water. It had cut the slaty layers smoothly off, so that the riven ends made a sheer wall, falling sharply to the water's edge on either side, and shutting out the sunshine save at midday, until it shot laughingly out from its prisoning banks, sparkled and gurgled for an instant over rounded stones, with the shelving beach-sands crumbling into it, and then lost itself in the blue bosom of the lake.

Innumerable springs oozed through the severed laminæ and trickled down the shelving sides, wearing sharp furrows in the crumbling rock in which the silvery rills were oft half-hidden by the hemlocks and beeches whose moss-clad roots found precarious hold upon the narrow ledges, while the ferns grew rank upon the dripping sides. For miles the stream rushed silent and

swift between its shadowing walls, inaccessible to human foot, save here and there where an impetuous tributary had cut a difficult path to the bottom of the cañon.

Almost noiselessly the little stream swept over its slippery bed, murmuring gently as it shot down some self-made flume into a deeper pool evenly hollowed in the soft smooth rock, sped quickly round and round a few times, and then glided swiftly on over the shallow ripple below. In these pools the water had a greenish tinge when the sunshine touched it, as if it had caught an emerald tint from the tender overhanging verdure. It must have suited admirably the complexions of the wood-nymphs who no doubt once sported in these secluded dells. Here and there where the shelving soil had been heaped against the side of the cliff and the restless stream had ceased to undermine it the hemlocks grew dark and high, so that their topmost branches showed sometimes above the level of the banks. Even yet there are few more romantic scenes, cosier nooks, or wilder bits than are found in this rugged glen that stretches back into the heart of the Chautauqua hills, with the emerald-tinted stream speeding swiftly and fiercely, yet almost noiselessly, along the

smooth but sinuous channel its restless waters have so deftly carved in the soft, gray, slippery shale. Heaven grant that the foot of the despoiler may be long delayed, and that the trout which hide in its cool waters may long continue too wary and too few to tempt the pot hunter to the unprofitable task of their extermination !

The harbor was a little bay, hardly more than a wavy indentation of the shore-line, forming an insecure roadstead, in which the modest craft of that day hid charily from the fierce north-westerners that visit the coast, behind a low sandy bar that jutted out into the lake just east of where the furious little torrent fought its ceaseless battle for the right of way into the blue depths. The bar was formed of the detritus which the stream brought down, the result of its erosive conflict with the friable rock that lined its course down the steep hillside. In the palmy days of the port this protecting shoal was supplemented by a rude pier ; and on the edge of the cliff, precisely where a perpendicular let fall from its outer tip would cut the shore-line, stood a well-built tower, bearing a light by no means despicable in its day, and well enough placed for craft beating up the lake with an off-shore breeze.

The hardy Voyageurs — the pioneers of all that lies west of the basin of the Hudson and the crest of the Alleghanies — who first discovered this curious breakwater named the harbor *Basse à Loin*, the "long bar." The English, when they came into possession of the region, with characteristic ruthlessness made haste to corrupt this significant phrase into *Barcelon*, and this, in turn, was transformed into *Barcelona*; which classic name may still be found on hydrographic charts of that coast, though pier and beacon have long since disappeared, and the fisherman now hangs his nets to dry where dock and warehouse stood.

A half-mile in front of the Inn and a hundred feet below it ran a line of hemlock crests, showing dark over the intervening meadows, which marked the course of another branch of the stream that built the harbor bar, only less tumultuous than its ally. Sweeping around the hill to the westward, it joined the other a mile or better before their united waters fell into the lake. Along the course of this impetuous tributary the Acadian Voyageurs established a short but difficult portage across the sharp divide which separates the northward from the southward flowing waters of the continent. Though

the headwaters of the Ohio were hardly half-a-dozen miles away, the crest to be surmounted rose more than a thousand feet in height, and the sharp precipitous cañon made the carry especially tedious. The path did not always follow the course of the stream, for the Voyageur's eye was as keen as the deer's instinct for the easiest grades and the shortest routes. So it happened that just opposite where the Inn stood the portage left the bed of the stream, crept up the bank and skirted the edge of the cañon till it struck a southward trending branch that led to the lowest notch in the range of hills, through which an easy trail ran down to the little lake on which they launched their batteaux and began their journeys to the steaming Gulf. Science, after hunting vainly for an easier way across the stubborn ridge, has been compelled to fall back on this, and the iron horse follows reluctantly the trapper's trail.

The little plateau on which the Inn stood was a slightly eminence, commanding in fair weather a view of the shore-line for half a score of miles in either direction from the little harbor where the white masts of the trading schooners showed plain above the intervening woodland. The light from its windows, it was said, was visible

upon the lake even beyond the range of the lighthouse beacon. The Inn itself was a rambling structure, that had grown up according to the owner's need or whim around the two-story log-house L'Honnête Boutonne had built before the portage was abandoned for the longer carry but shorter route by Presque Isle and Le Bœuf. It was intended at first to serve both as fort and residence, its upper story overlapping the lower so as to prevent assault ; for the hardy Voyageur was the pioneer settler, even of his adventurous people, along the route La Salle had discovered to the Mississippi. How he came to choose this isolation instead of accompanying the band of traders who made this their highway in their annual incursions to the rich fur-yielding region lying to the southward, it is impossible to say. Whether he was a deserter from the force under Celoron, who preferred remaining in what must then have been a genuine hunter's paradise, to the difficult and dangerous service of mapping out and marking the boundaries of His Most Catholic Majesty's possessions in the regions occupied by the Iroquois and the Miamies, or one of the two hundred stout axemen, who under the command of the enterprising Hugues Pean are said, four years later, to have cut a

wagon-road from Lake Erie to Lake Chautauqua along the line of the old portage, in four days. This fact shows that the carry must have been used much more by the trappers of New France during the seventy years succeeding La Salle's discovery than is generally supposed, for to have cut a wagon-road along the old portage route from lake to lake through a virgin forest, in four days, would have required the services, not of two hundred, but of at least a thousand axemen. It is probable that there was already a well-cut trail when Hugues Pean undertook the work he performed with such expedition, and with very little relish, in obedience to the imperative order of an absent superior.

Indeed, it is quite possible that L'Honnête Boutonne, instead of being a deserter from any organized company of explorers, was simply one of those adventurous Canadians who, yielding to the fascinations of a life in the wilderness, settled wherever their fancy dictated, became the friends and very often the kinsmen of the Indians, renouncing all wants beyond those of the savage, and abandoning all thought of a return to civilization. Why he chose this particular location is perhaps still more difficult to decide. It may be that he had some special reason for

desiring to live convenient to the portage and yet be hidden from the passer-by, as his rude dwelling must have been when the hemlocks grew thick and dark in the ravines between the trail and the chestnut-crowned ridge on which he built. Perhaps the very sightliness and beauty of the situation attracted him, as well it might ; since from its threshold he could witness the approach of any expedition intending to cross the portage, or note the smoke of the camp-fire of any trapper coming to share the abundance of his unbounded domain. It is not impossible that the ease of access to the impassable gorge in its rear may have been one of the controlling motives that determined this location of his dwelling. Once within the secluded depths of the gorge, he could bid defiance to any number of savage foes. Whatever the reasons which controlled his action, the ancestral Boutonne could not have selected a more picturesque location for his domicile if the whole region had been outspread before him in accurate projection. He must have been a bold man, this unlettered trapper, or he would not have dared to make his dwelling in the wilderness a hundred miles away from the nearest of his people ; and a shrewd one, moreover, to have fixed upon a

location combining so many and such rare advantages, — satisfying at once the demands of a strategist and the instinct of a poet.

When the French finally abandoned this region the sturdy trapper remained. There is a tradition that he brought to his sightly block-house a fair-haired English girl whom he found captive among the Indians and bought for a wife. Another version declares that she was given to him by his savage friends, who had learned that his sobriquet of L'Honnête Boutonne was true in both its aspects, — the Voyageur being at once honest and close-mouthed. He had passed away before the English really came into possession ; and his son's son, a man past middle age, was the host of the Inn when our story begins. All trace of the Voyageur, save his sobriquet, had been forgotten. This had become the family name, Boutonne being abbreviated first to Bouton, and afterward to Button ; while L'Honnête, transformed to the familiar "Lonny," became the given name of the heir of the Canadian trapper and the Indian captive, — whose marriage, if not sanctioned by priest or rite, had never been contested. Indeed, there was nothing to contest, for the title of the tract of land surrounding

his rude dwelling was not written on parchment or witnessed by a seal, and did not pass to his descendants by virtue of legitimacy. He had marked his own corners where he chose, or left them to be marked by others when and where it seemed good to them to fix the limits of their demesne. All that is known about them now is that on the first map made by the great Land Company who became the owners of all this region—under one of those curious grants by which in those early days illimitable realms were aliened by those who not only had no title to them but had even no knowledge of their boundaries or extent—an irregular quadrilateral was marked out between the forks of the creek, bounded on two sides by the impassable "gulfs" through which they ran, embracing some two hundred acres "more or less," and marked "Lon Button's Land," though his son Achille had even then long been in possession of the little opening which was all the axe had at that time conquered from the forest. To save all question, however, a nominal sum was afterward paid, and the title to Button's Inn became duly vested, under the broad seal of the Holland Land Company, in Lonny Button, the son of Achille Bouton, the son of L'Honnête Boutonne.

Though the trail by which the Voyageurs ascended the portage was some distance from Boutonne's house, the road that succeeded it ran hardly forty yards below the Inn, to which it was joined by a white sandy loop that swept up to the steps leading down from the low broad porch which extended across the front not only of the original gable, but of its numerous additions ; for the old log-house had been boarded over, and though it still held the place of honor as the public-room of the Inn, it was flanked on either side by more modern structures. Across the road were the barn and sheds, before which stood a great trough supplied with water from a spring that burst out of the hill-side behind the house. The downward slope in the rear of the barn was covered with apple-trees, with rich meadows lying beyond. The upward slope back of the house, and along the road on either side of it, was divided into fields, separated by high rail-fences with immense "locks" and "riders" to the very edge of the cañon, whose precipitous bank was itself abundant protection against trespassing beasts. Along this crest grew a narrow fringe of chestnut and maple, which the woodman had spared ; while the hemlocks that grew in the bottom,

and here and there upon the sharp declivity, showed dark and green through the pictured fringe which autumn painted in gorgeous colors.

Button's Inn — it was spelled *Bouton* on the sign, but common parlance had anglicized the name as Button — in the early days was a favorite resting-place, not only for those who climbed the ridge upon their way to and from the settlements that sprang up about the pleasant little lake whose shores have since become so famous, but many eastward and westward wayfarers left the sandy shore-line and climbed the hill to share the cheer of the old hostel even at the expense of two or three added miles and a heavy pull. It was thought to pay well both to man and beast, for good cheer and good company were always to be found there, and no horse ever drank at Button's overflowing trough without pricking up his ears and turning thither of his own accord when next he came to the fork of the road that led to the Inn. For more years than any record tells, Button's was the favorite hostel for many a mile upon the great highway that joined the newest West to the oldest East, as well as upon that cross-artery of traffic which led back from the harbor toward

the settlement around the lake beyond the divide, known to L'Honnête Boutonne as Jadaqua, and to his descendants as Chautauqua.

But at the time when our story begins all this had changed. The Inn still stood with its quaint sign, — a fearfully and wonderfully painted Indian smoking the pipe of peace, — creaking in the middle of the green grass-plot left by the circling track that led to its hospitable door. The great fireplace still yawned in the public-room, and the woodpile that flanked the last extension showed that no apprehension need be entertained of the failure of the roaring fire that blazed upon its hearth. Indeed, the fact that it did not fail, but burned on summer and winter alike, at least at night, was one of the reasons why Button's Inn had lost its popularity. It still afforded entertainment for man and beast, and neither larder nor granary had ever been known to fail. The water still ran over the sides of the mossy trough; the cold dashing stream at the bottom of the glen in the rear still yielded abundance of the rarest trout; the woods abounded in game; the pomace heaped about the cider-mill, and the bottles that lined the shelves which flanked the great chimney, testified that the guest might yet find

wholesome drink as well as toothsome fare at Button's.

Yet there were evident signs of decay about the old hostel. The sheds stood empty. The great barn-doors gaped darkly at it across the dusty road. The loop that bound the Inn to the roadway was grown up with grass, save two narrow tracks which the infrequent hoofs kept partly clear. The fences had fallen down. The paint had grown dull upon the house. The storms had half washed out the Indian, and left his pipe almost a matter of tradition. The fire still burned brightly at night, and shining through the windows served yet as a landmark to the sailors making the little port, whose light-house, like many another carefully-planned beacon, seemed to have been located chiefly to lure the mariner to doom ; for instead of sailing toward it, the eastward-bound mariner had to keep it abeam until well abaft if he would avoid the peril of the sharp-tongued *basse à loin*, from which, as we have seen, the port unwittingly derived its legal name and style. Before this fire the host of Button's Inn sat now oft-times alone in his great splint-bottomed rocker, the stalls empty and the kitchen dark. It had been the scene of a tragedy, and was still the

seat of mystery. In short, Button's Inn was haunted.

There were some who laughed at the superstition, and taking counsel of their comfort rather than their fears, still patronized the Inn, and affirmed its excellence. But the children of the neighborhood crept by it with beating hearts and blanched faces after dark, and the stranger wayfarer who heard its story told or hinted at, often judged that prudence counselled him to keep the straight road rather than climb the hill to test its truth. Rollicking companies of foot-travellers came now and then, prompted sometimes by curiosity and sometimes by the desire to get a glimpse of the inn-keeper's daughter, who was reputed to be as fair as the ghost was terrible. Those unerring judges of good cheer the pedlers, who thronged all the roads at that time with every conceivable form of pack and vehicle, these came often to stay over Sunday at the sightly hillside hostel. Yet even of these the number had grown less and less with each succeeding year as Button's Inn grew more and more dilapidated, and Lonny Button's fortunes became more and more desperate. The renown of its ghost, however, increased; and it seemed as if, having once destroyed the

Inn's prosperity, the "extravagant and erring spirit" who haunted its confines was even likely to build up the hostel's fortunes again by its own uncanny fame. For although many years had passed since the ghost had actually been seen by mortal eyes, the story was so well authenticated, and there was withal so much of mystery about its first appearance, that the tale, mellowed somewhat by time, had become an attraction rather than a terror to curious wayfarers. So Lonny Button, grown old and peevish, sat by his great wood-fire and told the story over and over to each new company of guests, while the little drama of life that went on within the Inn hinged on the facts of the ghostly tale.

A FAIR YOUNG MISTRESS.

“OZRO! Oz-r-o-o!”

The voice was clear and full, and echoed across the meadow that stretched down to the woods bordering on the lower creek, in a manner to bring a smile of satisfaction to its owner, — a buxom girl with red cheeks, dark eyes, and shiny black hair laid smoothly away from the faultless parting in the middle of her low broad forehead. She stood on the porch of the Inn, one hand resting on her hip, and the other turned palm outward above her eyes. She was dressed in home-made plaid of a warm dark color, which was very becoming to one of her style, and betrayed that innate sense of fitness which is the special inheritance of the descendants of French ancestry. The close sleeves were turned above the elbow, showing a plump tapering arm and firm round hand. The short skirt revealed, as she stood on the edge of the porch, a pair of shapely feet clad in serviceable calfskin shoes, neatly laced with leather strings

around the trim ankles, and permitting only a finger's breadth of the woollen stocking to be seen above. It was a bright September morning. A brisk west wind broke the distant lake into ripples which flashed blithely in the sunshine, while the tinted maples flamed against the intermingled evergreens on the slope below. She repeated her call, watching the great barn-door opposite as it swung idly to and fro, with visible impatience.

"What do ye want o' that shiftless creetur, Dotty? Jest tell me what 't is, an' I'll see 't he 'tends to it. Don't stan' there splittin' yer throat a hollerin' at him. Like's not he ain't within half a mile o' here. I never did see the beat o' him for that; fust he's here, then there, an' then you hain't no idee where he is."

The voice came from the public-room, the door of which opened on the porch, where the girl stood. Its owner appeared at the door as he ceased speaking. He was a man hardly above the middle height, but of great breadth of frame, which seemed to fill the wide doorway as he stood looking down upon the girl from the threshold, which was a step above the porch. His great iron-gray head fell forward between his shoulders. His eyes burned angrily under

huge overhanging brows. His wide mouth, close shut, showed the same savage strength that may have suggested the epithet *Boutonne*, by which the ancestor of Lon Button, — or as he was familiarly termed, "Hawk" Button, — was distinguished. The latter name was made all the more appropriate by the great beak-like nose which over-hung his wide mouth and thick purple lips. His face was covered with a thick stubble of white beard, which, though a week old, did not conceal the marks of dissipation.

"He does get around pretty sly, Pă," said the girl, pleasantly. The pronounciation of the last word was the only indication of her Acadian ancestry. She gave the vowel the peculiar short, flattened sound which still prevails in the Canadian provinces.

"Say *sly*, Dotty, — *sly*'s the word," rejoined the father, vehemently. "He's just as sly as the devil, and to my mind in league with him, too."

"Oh, don't talk like that, Pă," answered the girl with a frown. "Only think what Ozro does for us, — more'n any man we could hire, and without a word of complaint even at your scolding."

"That's it, — that's jest it," said the father, stepping down upon the porch with an uncer-

tainty of movement that suggested inebriety (though he was sober enough at the time) and shaking his finger toward her argumentatively, — “that’s jest it. ’T ain’t nateral, don’t ye see, for a boy of his age to do so much an’ stan’ so much, without makin’ a row about it. Why don’t he run away? We don’t want him here, — never did want him, Dotty; only your mother,” — he lowered his voice to a whisper and looked cautiously around as he spoke, — “your mother, Dotty, it was her doin’s keepin’ him. What did we want of the beggar’s brat? He’s brought nothin’ but bad luck, — bad luck an’ the —” He paused and glanced back toward the room he had left, with a curious, startled manner.

“There, there, Pă,” said the girl, soothingly but yet imperatively, “you go and sit down, an’ leave me to take care of Ozro. He an’ I get on first-rate, you know.”

“That’s jest what’s the matter, Dotty,” said her father, as he yielded to her touch and was led back to his great armchair before the fire; “you get along with him too well. Jest see how he’s bewitched yer mother, child. Only look what’s happened to her an’ hers sence he showed his miserable carrot head under

this roof! An' yit see what store she sets by him! It's been nigh fifteen years sence she's spoke a loud word, an' we growin' poorer an' poorer all the time. But that boy had to be sent to school an' have all the advantages, no matter what happened to the rest on us. Then there would n't nothin' do but I must make over the title of the place to her, an' I 'spect next thing she'll be givin' it to him. Should n't wonder ef she'd done it a'ready. That would be a nice kittle o' fish, would n't it?"

"Don't you fret about it, Pă; I'll look after Mă and Ozro too, and see't there don't anything go wrong with you, either. You just leave things to me," said the girl, humoring his mood, but evidently accustomed to control.

"Don't have anything to do with him, Dotty — don't. He'll be the ruination of ye ef ye do, jest as he's been the ruination of Button's Inn."

"But he's the main stay of it now," laughed Dotty, as if accustomed to such ebullitions on the part of her father. "I must go and call him to go down into the 'Gulf' for some fish. You know to-morrow is Saturday, and — you know who comes on Saturday," she added archly.

"What — what? Who?" said Hawk Button, looking quickly around.

"Why," said the daughter, gayly, "I did n't think you would forget your favorite, Mr. Dewstowe."

"Dewstowe? Is Dewstowe comin' to-morrer? That's right, Dotty; be good to Dewstowe. He's the right sort, Dewstowe is. Besides that, he's got money. He'll make the Inn what it ought to be ag'in. That's right; get ready for him — that's a good girl."

Dotty Button — her name was written Dorothy in the family Bible — left the house and crossed the road to the barn. She paused just inside the great door, and called again, but not loudly, and the tone was one of confidence and familiarity.

"Ozro!"

"Well?" came in a cheerful voice from the shed at the rear.

"What are you doing?"

"Killing a sheep."

"May I come?"

"Oh, yes; he's dead!"

Dotty stepped hesitatingly across the wide floor and peeped through a crack in the back door before she showed herself at the opening.

for one half the great door was propped back against the side of the barn. A young man, who had just finished slaughtering a lamb, came briskly toward her, wiping his hands on the apron he wore. They left bloody stains on the white linen, but this did not disturb the inn-keeper's daughter; she was accustomed to such sights. She thought the hands were very shapely, however, as indeed they were, though densely freckled by exposure. They were scrupulously clean except for traces of his recent occupation; for the day of the "realistic" novel had not dawned, and there were yet people living even in country places who sometimes washed their hands.

"What is it?" he asked briskly.

"I wonder if you could n't go and get some trout to-day. You might see a turkey, too. I heard one gobbling down in the 'Gulf' last night."

"Perhaps I might," answered the young man.

The floor on which she stood was some three or four feet from the ground. He picked a straw from it and began to bite off little pieces as he spoke. She leaned against the centre post, and pushed bits of rubbish from the edge with her foot. He watched the foot, absently.

"There'll be lots of folks here to-morrow if it's fair; and it most likely will be," she said, glancing at the sky.

"Should n't wonder," he responded, without looking up.

"Well, are you going to do it, Grumpy?" she asked saucily.

"Oh! — get you the trout, you mean?"

"Of course. What are you dreaming about?"

"Would n't *you* like to go to the 'Gulf' this afternoon, Dorothy?"

His face flushed, but he did not look up.

The girl started at this unusual address, and she glanced quickly down at her companion, but with a look that did not imply displeasure.

"Oh, I can't!" she answered carelessly; "we've got more'n we can do, — all of us. Mă," — she gave the vowel the same curious short sound she had used in addressing her father, — "Mă ain't very well, and Louise and I have got enough to do to keep us on the jump all day."

"Then *I* shall not go!" decisively.

"Now — Ozro!" protestingly.

The young man looked up at her for a moment, resting one hand against the sill on which she stood, and then gazed off at the blue lake

which lay glimmering through the trees, so far below that it seemed almost at their feet.

"Do you know what day to-morrow will be, Dorothy?"

"Why, Saturday, of course."

"And what day of the month?"

"The 10th of September."

"And what happened on that day?"

"I don't know — unless it was Perry's victory," with a little laugh.

"Nothing else?" He was still looking toward the lake and biting off bits of the straw.

The girl looked down at him a moment, and then exclaimed: —

"Why, it will be your birthday, won't it, Ozro? And you will be twenty-one!"

There was no mistaking the thrill of pleasure in her tones.

"I s'pose you'll be leaving us pretty soon, though?" she added thoughtfully, after a pause.

"I shall be *free*!" said the young man, with emphasis.

"Of course," said the girl, absently. "I don't know what we'll do, though!"

She leaned against the post, and picking up the hem of her apron began plaiting it over her

thumb-nail as she spoke. There was a long interval of silence.

"I don't know what we'll do, I'm sure!" she repeated at length, with a sigh.

The young man turned and looked keenly up at her.

"I s'pose," she added, as she turned slowly toward the house, "we'll have to do the best we can."

That afternoon, when the sun was sinking toward a golden bed in the placid waters of the lake, Dotty Button sat upon a bowlder that lay beside the path leading down into the glen familiarly known as "the Gulf," and gazed thoughtfully out over the fair picture the early autumn spread at her feet. The rock was full of curious little specks, at which she picked listlessly with a bit of twig which she broke from a bush near her. She did not know that they were garnets brought from undiscovered Alaska by the great glacier whose southern edge had rested for unreckoned ages where she sat.

The house was hidden from her view except the upper windows, which the setting sun painted with golden light. Beyond it she saw the harbor and the unruffled bosom of the lake, with the sun shining across its bright waters.

She heard footsteps coming up the rugged path, and her face lighted with pleasure as she peered through the hemlocks and recognized the young man, Ozro Evans. A moment later he laid a brace of turkeys and a string of trout at her feet, and stood looking down at her as she examined them with the unconscious keenness of a connoisseur.

"Well, you *have* had luck to-day!" she exclaimed, in tones of hearty admiration. Her eyes wandered from the game at her feet to the comely figure of the young man before her without losing any of their approving glow.

"I hope your friends will enjoy them," he said, as a look of pain crossed his face.

A woman, gray-haired and wan of feature, who watched out of the sun-gilded upper window of the Inn, sank upon her knees as she saw them together, and raised her hands to heaven, while tears rained down her wrinkled cheeks.

A REGULAR BOARDER.

EIGHTEEN years before our story opens, a woman had come to the Inn one day in autumn accompanied by a little boy. She was well dressed, and the trunk that was taken from the boot of the stage and deposited upon the porch bore the unmistakable stamp of wealth and respectability. It was covered with undressed deerskin, trimmed at the corners with rawhide, and studded with brass nails forming on the top the initials "M. E. E." The lady seemed greatly depressed, which might have been the effect of her long ride. She wished to rest over Sunday, she said, if she could secure desirable lodgings; if not she would go on to the harbor, and risk the chance of a boat to her destination, as she was quite unable to travel farther by stage. She was unwilling to risk the chance of seasickness, however, and preferred to recuperate for a few days after her long ride before proceeding on her journey. Fortunately the

big chamber over the public-room was unoccupied, and to this the guest was shown, the landlord apologizing for the narrow winding stairs as he conducted her to it.

It was the upper story of L'Honnête Bouttonne's old block-house. Larger than the room below because of the overhang already noted, it was accessible only by the stairway from the public-room. In the early days of the Inn it had been a common lodging-room where the guests slept as they could, while the room beneath it served as kitchen, dining and lodging room for the innkeeper and his family. The heavy floor, separated from the ceiling by the thickness of the great logs on which it rested, effectually muffled all sounds from the room below. It had been somewhat modernized in the course of the various changes which had been effected for the Inn's enlargement and adornment. On the outside it was clapboarded in decorous uniformity with the additions, and like them had been painted a glowing red. Within it had been half-ceiled, as it was then termed,—that is, from the eaves upward along the rafters,—to shut out the cold. This ceiling was as smoke-stained and brown almost as the hewn logs that formed the walls. Near the rear end a rude

log-beam crossed the room. Against this the front of the great stone chimney rested, and a partition was built along it on one side, in which was the door leading to the stairway. This stairway was regarded as a triumph of convenience and economy by the carpenter by whom it was built. It was narrow and difficult, but occupied only the width of the chimney. In the front of the room, reaching almost to the peak, were two square windows which commanded a view unrivalled for extent and beauty. At that time, however, scenery was not so highly prized as it has been of recent years. The appointments of the room were comfortable, but not luxurious. The fireplace, which gaped black and empty, was only less capacious than the one below.

The strange lady at once sank down upon the bed and asked to have a cup of tea sent to her. It was brought by the landlady, who regarded with a surprise not unmingled with envy, as it seemed, the rich belongings of her guest. It is no wonder if she did, for it is quite impossible to guess at this time the difference which then existed in the matter of feminine adornment between the East and the West. To the starved instinct of the landlady

this well-dressed woman no doubt seemed a miracle of luxury.

When Monday came, the lady announced her intention of remaining for a week, or even longer, if she continued to be pleased with her surroundings. As she accompanied the announcement with the prepayment of board for the time specified, no objections were made. So, after serious consultation between the landlord and his wife, the lady became a weekly tenant of the room, with its great windows looking out upon the sparkling lake over the intervening woodland, at a rate that would seem ridiculous enough to any modern Boniface. Indeed, it was accounted not only a piece of good fortune, but a distinguished honor, that one so evidently capable of judging the merits of the Inn, and able to indulge her inclination, should think of making so prolonged a stay beneath its roof. Even a less desirable lodger would have been welcome; for though the Inn was prosperous, especially for that day when a little was counted a fortune because others had so much less, leisurely travellers were yet rare along the line of the old portage. The stage was very uncertain in its time of arrival, and the wayfarers consisted mainly of emigrants to the still farther

West. One that paid board regularly week by week in cash was a treasure not to be lightly esteemed. Button's had never had a guest of such importance before, and might never have another.

The stranger stayed until the weeks grew into months, and she became familiarly known in the neighborhood as "the rich woman at Button's." Her name was Evans: Mrs. Matilda E. Evans was the address of the letters she received during her stay. She was young, certainly not more than twenty-five, unusually attractive in appearance, but evidently oppressed by some great sorrow or recent calamity, which gave to her manner a reserve not altogether in keeping with a sprightly temperament, youth, and health. She made no acquaintances, but occupied herself in reading, embroidery, and rambling about the hills and the glen with the boy, to whom she seemed passionately devoted. Why she should tarry so long upon her journey, when she would resume it, or whither it would lead,—of these things nobody was any wiser than on the night she came.

For a time there was some attempt on the part of the neighbors to penetrate this reserve. The kindest community is somewhat inclined to resent the idea of concealment on the part of

one of its members. They may object to garrulous reminiscence in regard to the past of a new-comer, but silence as to one's antecedents is a far graver offence. Of this fact the rich lady at the Inn seemed to be entirely indifferent. Hints were wasted on her. Of what lay before her or what behind in the path of life she said nothing. Of origin or destination she gave no clew; nor did she explain why she loitered at the sightly Inn during all the pleasant autumn days, nor give any hint when she would resume her journey. In short, she treated the good people of the region as if it were none of their business why she came among them or how long she remained. So they said ill-natured things about her, — her and the toddling boy over whom she watched so tenderly. But she did not hear what they said; and if she guessed their innuendoes she gave no sign. The people of the Inn were naturally proud of a guest of such wealth and refinement. She reflected credit on the hostel; therefore the landlord fought her battles for her, and such was his prowess that no one dared to speak lightly of the Inn's strange guest in his presence.

There was one influence, however, against which the landlord's championship would have

been in vain, had it not been seconded by the unqualified approval of his wife. The landlady became greatly attached to her guest, and spent much of her leisure in listening while the stranger read from books she had brought with her, or in learning those niceties of needle-work which were quite unknown in that region. The landlady had a baby girl, which as the weather grew colder passed much of the time in the guest's room playing with the boy, and the two women were drawn unconsciously nearer to each other by the mutual fondness of the children. So the landlord's wife joined him in sounding the praises of their guest, and her approval effected what his defiant championship could not. For the landlord and his wife were noted far and wide as a strangely contrasted pair. Each represented a distinctive element of the life which grew up on the verge of that great tide which was rushing westward to possess the continent. Each was the complement of the other in this respect. Many wondered that they should ever have come together. It was generally agreed, however, that it was but another instance of the attraction of dissimilars which has been the ever inexplicable problem of love since the world began. In truth the marriage

of Lonny Button and Lucy Rigdon was explainable on no other hypothesis. What she was he was not ; and that was the end of speculation.

Lonny Button, at the time of which we write, was in the prime of life, — a handsome man, somewhat given to boasting when in his cups, but very popular in the neighborhood as well as among the patrons of the Inn. He had come into possession, on his father's death, of the property known even then as "Button's Inn," though hardly possessing the character of a hostel, few travellers passing that way, and those of the roughest and sturdiest character. These were mainly trappers and traders, with a sprinkling of backwoodsmen and adventurers of all sorts, who were inspired with a restless desire to see what opportunities the yet unexplored region which lay beyond might offer. Such as came always found entertainment, for which they paid or not as they chose, the host counting the privilege of their society worth quite as much as the rude fare he furnished.

So it was in the days of L'Honnête, and afterward in the time of Achille. When Lonny came to early manhood, and the house was made desolate by the death of his mother, the tide of New England life was beginning to force itself

through the fair domain known now as the Empire State, in search of an outlet to that West the greatness of which it instinctively but dimly discerned. The only road to it up to that time led across the Alleghanies and down the valley of the Ohio. Along this had come the pioneers of the Ohio Company under the lead of the quaintly pedantic surveyor Gist, bringing a strangely commingled tide of Northern and Southern migration to the banks of the Miami, and founding there the empire of the great new West. But the land of Penn, with its curious masses of unassimilated and uncommingling foreign life, intervened. So the Yankees, with their restless occidental yearning, were swarming over the narrow belt which the Dutchman had preoccupied, and rushing toward the Great Lakes, blazing the pathway of destiny, — seizing only the points of most abundant promise, and hurrying past each other in the hope of yet more abundant opportunities. The wilderness was being dotted with homes, and a few had already fixed their habitations on the borders of that inland sea for whose defence the sailors of New England were a score of years afterward to unite with the few frontiersmen in redoubtable conflict.

Lon Button had the virtues and vices of the border. Like his father, and his father's father, he was brave, open-handed, and even in his youth a woodman of repute. Of the amenities and refinements of life he knew little. Full of rude force, he seemed exactly fitted to become one of those social boulders which the restless glacier of civilization projects beyond its farthest edge, only to overtake and overwhelm by its slow but sure approach. From this apparently predestined fate he was saved by marriage.

Lucy Rigdon, his wife, was the daughter of a family who had come from the East and settled on the shore of the lake, a hundred miles almost to the eastward. The family were religious enthusiasts of great austerity, and she herself was of such correct and saintly demeanor as to have deterred the young men of the region from any attempt at love-making, though she was confessedly the fairest girl in the settlement. Lonny Button came, saw, and not only conquered but captured and carried her away to become the mistress of the Inn when the tide of westward travel began to flow past its threshold, and it really became an inn. Of course, her family predicted for her the most dolorous destiny if she should mate with one who not only had the rough

manners of the frontier, but was without a family tree, and presumably inherited papistical inclinations. They were especially fearful of peril to the purity of her faith. But nothing could shake her determination ; and the little craft which Lonny Button had built to take his peltries to the newly-established trading-post, carried back a far more precious freight than he had anticipated. Perhaps she felt a call to undertake his reclamation. Perhaps the picture he drew of the romantic beauty of a situation which half a century of occupancy had done much to improve, may have had its influence in inducing her to abandon the bleak discomfort of her father's over-crowded cabin.

The rough backwoodsman was not exactly a model husband in the modern acceptance of the term ; but he was all the more amenable to his young wife's influence because of the memory of his mother, the fair-haired captive who after the murderous Wyoming massacre had found her way to his father's hut. She had been a gentlewoman, and, despite her misfortunes, never forgot the fact. She was not ungrateful to the sturdy trapper for the kindness which had preserved her life, and by her patience and tenderness came at length to exercise unlimited

control over the husband whom fate had so curiously provided. That she should long for her land and people was natural enough. She had filled her son's mind with pleasant pictures of the clustered homes in the valley of the Connecticut, and taught him the little she could recall of what she herself had learned. Her language and her religion became the language and religion of the household; and her son, despite his inheritance of adventurous inclination, was ambitious most of all things for the civilization and comforts of that "East," which was to him the land beautiful and delectable. Perhaps it was some resemblance to his mother that had so powerfully attracted Lonny to the fair and gentle Lucy Rigdon. At all events, her advent seemed but the continuation of a rule which death had interrupted, and destroyed the last lingering tendency on the part of L'Honnête Boutonne's descendant to abandon the picturesque settlement his grandfather had made upon the sightly hillside for the charms of a wilder and more remote region. It was not in vain that two generations of Puritan blood had mingled with the dark drops in the veins of the rugged Canadian. Little by little the *patois* of the trapper had disappeared. That sense of

domesticity which seems inseparable in English natures from comfort and cosiness of surroundings had from the very first been at work upon the little clearing. The apple-blossoms mingled with the thorn and the wild-cherry in the edge of the forest before Lonny was born ; and before he had arrived at manhood peaches and plums were fruiting in lavish abundance along the sides of the old portage. It was to this home that Lonny Button brought the slender, blue-eyed, New England girl whom he had won for his bride. From that first hour when entering its rude doorway she had knelt and prayed, "Peace be within these walls!" she had been its ruling spirit. Her husband renounced the habits as well as the language of his father's people. Though he remained a leader among the boisterous spirits of the region, his pride centred in his home and its constantly increasing comfort and attractiveness. When, therefore, his wife suggested that the little schooner he had built — the first of the great fleet which the demand of our inland traffic has brought into existence on the Lakes — should be sold, and the proceeds used to enlarge and improve the old block-house, and establish at Button's a regular inn where the wayfarer's needs should

be supplied for a specific sum, instead of leaving the amount to the traveller's option, it met his instant and hearty approval.

It was a wise suggestion from every point of view. It met an actual demand. The tide of Western travel needed just such a hostel. It was in a line, too, with Lonny Button's best aspirations. The mixture of blood in his veins did not fit him for a husbandman. Strong as he was, and proud of his home as he was, he had no love for the laborious task of developing its charms. All he could acquire he delighted to expend in its improvement ; but the instincts of the Voyageur were too strong to allow him to be content with a farmer's life. The toils of the hunter, the danger of the sailor, — these were nothing to him. Few men were his equal with the axe, yet little of the clearing at Button's was due to the labor of his hands. It had grown each year, and he was proud of its extent and neatness ; but its improvement was mainly due to the thrift and prudence of his wife, whose care had brought order and beauty out of confusion.

The establishment of an Inn, however, was an enterprise exactly suited to his talents. He knew that his good nature sometimes led him

too far in the company of boon companions, and his open-handed generosity needed the restraint of his wife's foresight and frugality. The result, as his wife foresaw, was that he was at once removed from temptation and given an occupation for which he was peculiarly fitted. So Lonny Button became the model landlord of that region in his day and time; and with the aid of his wife's excellence as a housekeeper and her general administrative capacity, Button's became the favorite hostel on the great highway where it was situated. He gave it popularity, and she that air of comfort and eminent respectability which brought it favor in the eyes of every home-sick woman and broken-hearted man who, faring westward under the spur of misfortune, was worn out not only by the hardships of the journey, but by the coarseness and vulgarity of the associations of the road.

Thus the Inn became prosperous; grew year by year in extent, comfort, and convenience; the renown of the landlord's good nature extended, and the comely hostess became a pleasant memory of a journey whose irksomeness it is now difficult to imagine. The bill of fare was not varied as judged by modern standards, but of the excellence of what appeared upon the board

at Button's there could be no doubt ; and however rollicking the company that gathered in the public-room, there was none that did not bow in reverence when the gentle hostess standing at the head of the table looked quietly up and down it until all were silent, and then merely saying, "Let us thank God for His mercies," dropped her eyes and murmured a half-inaudible grace.

Lon Button was no saint, but the man would have had to answer to him *vi et armis* who had dared to breathe aloud during this one devotional act that was never intermitted at the Inn. He did not say *Amen*, nor pretend to any partnership in his wife's devotions, but he was proud of the inflexible spirit she displayed, and liked especially to hear her praised as a "religious woman." So their lives flowed peacefully on, — not exactly harmoniously, since she never came to like the jolly company he affected, and he showed no inclination for the religious associations she so highly prized. The hostel became at once the home of the sturdy circuit-riders, — those knights of the cross and saddle-bags, — who harmonized alike with the religious enthusiasm of the wife and the careless *bonhomie* of the landlord. They were noted throughout the

country as a queerly mated but unquestionably loving and devoted pair.

This state of affairs continued until their son Jack reached early manhood, — or rather the period when in those days the young man began to dream of self-direction and independent achievement. Jack was the picture of his father, who was naturally proud of his comeliness, vivacity, and strength. He was a wilful lad, and even before he had grown to man's estate had taken to wild ways. The adventurous spirit of the *Voyageur* cropped out in him with renewed strength. His mother wept and prayed ; his father laughed and chided. Secretly he exulted in his son's escapades, having no wish that he should grow up a milksop, as he thought his mother's teachings likely to incline him to do. When they became too serious he stormed and threatened. The high-spirited boy, fretted by his mother's tears and chafed by his father's threats, fled to that Mecca of the adventurous youth of that day, — the Lake.

The innkeeper, sympathizing with his son's unrest, in order that his inclination might be gratified without any loss of self-respect or lowering of the family pride bought an interest in a fine brig. On this the lad embarked, nomi-

nally as a deck-hand, but with that real sense of rank which always attaches to ownership. On her first voyage she was seized by the Government officials, — or rather the crew volunteered to serve under Perry, and took the vessel with them. After the fight at Put-in-Bay she was burned, having been rendered useless by the hot engagement, and her crew returned home with only the reputation of heroic conduct to recompense them for their loss. The Government did, indeed, profess an intention to pay them both for their craft and their services ; but the time never came when the sense of gratitude for favors rendered was strong enough in the Republic to induce the representatives of the people, who are the guardians of the national honor, to appropriate money for such a purpose. The time came indeed when it was deemed an impertinence to claim compensation for such loss, one of the most patriotic of our statesmen declaring it to be absurd, because “the British would have destroyed these vessels if they had not been overcome, and the owner’s loss would have been just as great if they had not volunteered in the public defence.” This reason does not seem exactly conclusive, but it served its purpose.

Jack had borne himself gallantly in the fight, but the reputation of being a hero was more than he could bear. No life but one of constant change and adventure could satisfy him afterward. He was now past twenty, handsome, strong, and daring, — following the Lake during the summer and lounging on shore during the winter, when he made the Inn his headquarters. More than once he had caused serious drain upon the purse and patience of his parents to save him from disgrace. This son — the idol of both — thus brought about a curious estrangement between the landlord and his wife. The landlord blamed his wife's religious zeal for his son's excesses, and insisted that her prayers had "sent the boy to the devil." She felt the sting of conscience for having permitted her love to lead her to violate the divine command, "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers." Her son's waywardness she looked upon as a punishment for this sin, — a sin which could be condoned only by the reclamation of both their lives. This task she felt had been laid upon her shoulders ; and from that moment she had but one aim in life, — the conversion of her husband and her son. Gentle as was her character, she was not one to shrink from any

divinely imposed duty. She remonstrated constantly with her husband for humoring the boy's inclinations and making light of his excesses ; charged him with the ruin of their son's life and hopes of salvation ; endured patiently and uncomplainingly his recriminations, and saw him taking to coarser ways and yielding to dissolute inclinations with inexpressible grief, but without any thought of modifying her own conduct. She "had taken up her cross," as she phrased it to herself, conscious of rectitude and anxious only to do her full duty.

Thus the life of the Inn went on without open discord, but with a singular change which the accustomed wayfarer could not but perceive. As Hawk Button grew more careless and dissipated, his wife became even more zealous and exemplary. The son's irregularities enhanced the father's wrath and increased the mother's solicitude. He returned to the Inn this year as usual, at the close of navigation on the Lake. Soon afterward, stories began to circulate in the neighborhood reflecting on the character of the guest at the Inn. It was intimated that she permitted Jack Button to pay her attentions inconsistent with the position of a married woman. That the young man was greatly attracted toward

the fair lady there could be no doubt ; he seized every pretext to serve her, and haunted his mother's room as he had never done before, with the express purpose, so the uncharitable said, of meeting there the fascinating stranger of inscrutable antecedents. The son's return somewhat enlivened the domestic life of the Inn. Despite his irregularities, and the father's consequent wrath and harshness, Jack was still the idol of his parents, and his presence for a time seemed to lessen the distance between them. Mrs. Evans appeared to share in this added cheerfulness, and no doubt relished to a certain extent the presence of the handsome young sailor, whose admiration seemed to her only respectful courtesy. It was remarked that she was gayer than before, laughed oftener, was less inclined to solitude, paid more attention to dress, and in short was quite changed in appearance and manner.

She began to go into society too, — if one may be allowed to speak of society in such a rustic neighborhood. Before this she had never visited any of the neighbors, and indeed had hardly been out of sight of the Inn except to attend preaching once or twice with the landlady. Soon after Jack's return she went with

him and his mother to a husking-frolic at a neighbor's house. She had never seen one before, and evidently enjoyed the rude mirth not a little, though she took no part in the games, refusing Jack's repeated solicitations with quiet but inoffensive decision. That Jack's attentions were very marked was evident to all except the lady herself and his mother. The former, unused as she was to rustic ways, was quite unconscious of the interpretation given to what she had been accustomed to regard as only ordinary civilities, while the mother was too glad to have her son at home once more and conducting himself with something like propriety, to think of criticising anything he did. As for Jack himself, the very fact that he was less riotous and dissipated than usual after his summer's absence, was cited by the gossips as infallible testimony of his infatuation for the stranger, who was justly regarded as of all the more questionable character because she so far outshone the rustic beauties of the neighborhood.

So it was that the report went out that "the rich woman at the Inn" was "carrying on scandalously with Jack Button." It was even whispered around that since his return she was

always to be seen clad in silk and wearing jewels worth a fabulous amount, standing at the lighted window of her room and watching eagerly the arrival of the stage, — a thing she had never done before. It was noted, too, that the stage generally brought Jack Button from the harbor, where he usually went on the day it made its weekly trip. These two facts were linked together greatly to the discredit of one whom scandal pursued all the more malignantly because it found so little that was blameworthy in her life, — whose chief offence, indeed, lay in the fact that she did not afford more substantial food for gossip.

The friendship of the exemplary landlady, as well as the stranger's devotion to her child and the quiet reserve that marked her conduct, should have been a sufficient answer to any such imputations. But the fact that she was supposed to be rich, sought no society and bestowed no confidences, was in itself hardly less than a crime in a community quick to resent even an implied assumption of superiority, and not slow to punish any departure from its established customs.

Of the letters the lady received during her stay at the Inn, one arrived some time in No-

vember ; the other was brought by the stage-driver on Christmas Eve. It was handed to him by the postmaster at the harbor, where it had been mailed the day before. Jack Button came up in the stage that night as usual, and Mrs. Evans was standing in the door of the public-room awaiting its arrival. It was observed that she was dressed with unusual elegance, her rich chestnut hair twisted in a superb coil about her head, the clear white skin suffused with tender blushes, and her eyes filled with the dewy radiance of unmistakable expectancy. She scanned the passengers who alighted one by one, as the glare from the stage-lanterns and the windows of the Inn fell upon them.

The snow was falling rapidly, and the driver was anxious to press on before his way was blocked. It was the first heavy storm of the season, and the stage was yet on wheels. The horses smoked after the heavy pull up the hill, the rising vapor from their heated flanks mingling with the white flakes that fell silently and steadily, giving a peculiar softness to the light which could scarcely penetrate the flocculent mass. Jack Button was the last to emerge from the snow-laden vehicle. As he came up

the steps it was noted that he stopped and gazed as if spell-bound at the beautiful vision on the threshold of the public-room. There was no postoffice at the Inn; but the stage-driver was accustomed to bring mail from the nearest offices on either side for persons living in the vicinity, and leave it in the landlord's care.

"Are there any more?" asked the lodger, eagerly, after Jack had alighted. Her tone was cheerful, though not without a shade of apprehension.

"No more," said the landlord, coming back from a conversation with the driver, with a letter in his hand. He held it up to the candle-light shining through the windows as he came upon the porch, and added, after an instant's pause for deciphering its address, "But here's a letter for you, Mrs. Evans."

She reached out her hand and took it, making some inquiry about the postage, at that time always paid by the receiver, then turned slowly away and went up the stairs to her room. There was evident disappointment in her manner. She did not speak to Jack, who, it was afterwards remembered, stood silently gazing at her until she disappeared, then turned away

with a sigh, and went to his mother's room, as the stage drove off into the maze of falling flakes.

In addition to three passengers who came by the stage, there was quite a company gathered that night at Button's. Such comfortable lodgment was rare in the sparsely-settled region where it stood, and many wayfarers in those days objected to travelling on Sunday. The fair lodger was the subject of much remark among the boisterous company around the fire in the public-room, that night. A half-hour after the stage had passed, Jack Button went hastily through the room, opened the door by the side of the chimney, and climbed the narrow stairs to the room above. On his return he growled a fierce reply to some rude jest touching the stranger, and went out, banging the door behind him.

The next morning the snow lay heaped in dense masses upon the hills. The wind had risen during the night, and the roads were not only impassable but indistinguishable in the white expanse. The drifts had hidden the fences, save here and there where the "locks" and "riders" rose above the rounded hillocks that marked their courses. The line of hem-

locks showed dark and pitiless across the frozen waste. The weather was intensely cold. The wind blew steadily, carrying little clouds of frozen particles along the white-rifted surface, dropping them in the lee of every bush, and scattering them through every crevice of the Inn. The snow was dry and light, creaking under the feet, and choking the way like heaped-up sand. The landscape was covered with dim shadowy forms that flitted along the snowy crests like vengeful frost-sprites, seeking everywhere for something warm and living which they might slay and swathe in icy cerements. It was the very type of relentless death,—the cold cruel wind, the flying frozen scud, the chill lifeless sunshine, unclouded, but bringing no hint of warmth, and the white, sparkling, ever-shifting shroud that covered the earth's frozen bosom.

At the Inn the frostwork was thick upon the panes, the fires roared in the great chimneys, but the paths were uncut, and the day was well advanced before the snow was cleared from the porch. There were blanched faces at the windows, and people spoke in whispers, looking round suspiciously as they talked. The cold seemed to have frozen everything like mirth.

They even forgot that it was Christmas Day, and no one gave his fellow the customary greeting of the season. Men shivered around the glowing fire. Button's Inn had entered upon an epoch of mystery and misfortune.

A VACANT CHAMBER.

IT was late before the people of the Inn were astir that morning. Both the storm and the fact that it was the day of rest tended to produce this result. Travellers were usually weary in those days and liked a late breakfast on Sunday, making but short journeys if they travelled at all. The storm had put even such journeying out of the question, however. So host and guests slept late.

The landlady's first thought was of the guest in the room above the public. She knew the chamber had been exposed to the full force of the storm, and she had thought of its occupant more than once when she waked in the night. As soon as she had seen that the hired girl had the breakfast properly under way she went up to her guest's room, thinking she would wish her a "Merry Christmas" and start the fire for her, the weather being so unusually severe. Such a thing as providing a fire in a

guest's room was almost unheard of in a wayside inn at that time; and it was only the accident of the old block-house and the result of its transformation into an inn that made such a luxury possible in the strange lady's chamber.

The landlady went through the public-room, where three or four men were still asleep on buffalo robes before the fire, and climbed the narrow stair, her apron full of fine-split kindling-wood with which to carry into effect her charitable purpose. Reaching the landing she knocked upon the door, and then tried the latch. Finding the door locked she knocked again, and then called her guest by name,—first softly, and then louder,—but received no answer. Depositing the kindlings beside the door she ran down the stairs, brushing the splinters from her clean apron as she did so, and called to her husband. Somehow she felt afraid to remain at the head of the stairs; yet there was nothing to occasion her any alarm,—nothing but silence. Returning with her husband, the knocking and calling were repeated. Still there was no response. At his wife's suggestion Hawk Button placed his shoulder against the door, and the frail casement gave way as if it had been

of pasteboard rather than of staunch pine. He staggered forward as it fell in, but at once shrank back to where his wife stood on the narrow landing. They entered the room together. There was nothing unusual about it except the amazing stillness. There were little spits of snow on the floor, which the wind had sifted through the crevices in the unplastered wall, and one showed white and chill across the dark coverlid. In the great armchair, her face to the window, one hand hanging by her side and the other lying across her lap, was the occupant of the room. The snow heaped up on the window-ledge was not whiter than her face. On the stand beside the bed stood an iron candlestick and an empty vial. The candle had burned down into the socket, the melted tallow running out in yellowish waves upon the white polished surface of the little maple table. The boy was sleeping peacefully.

They crossed the room on tiptoe. The landlady picked up the vial and read on it the word "laudanum." She set it down, and her husband repeated her act. Then they turned and looked at the occupant of the chair. Neither spoke. The woman was dressed as she had been the night before. Her hair lay half-

uncoiled upon her shoulder. The dress was open at the throat, and unhooked to the waist. One sleeve was removed, showing the bare shapely arm, with the narrow white band at the top. The warm-tinted hair veiled the white bosom. The landlady, with instinctive modesty, took a scarf that hung upon a chair and flung it across the woman's shoulders, leaving the face uncovered. The eyes were closed as if in slumber, but she shuddered as her hand brushed against the pallid cheek. There had been no question from the very first as to the fact of death.

The room was icy cold. The landlady spoke of sending for a doctor. The husband shook his head; the roads were impassable. Both knew it would be useless even were it feasible. The landlord came and touched the hand that lay upon the woman's lap as if to make sure of his thought. As he did so his eyes fell upon something on the floor, a little to the left of the chair. He drew his wife's attention to it, and stooped to pick it up. She called to him to let it lie, but he already had it in his hand. It was a small red morocco pocketbook, gilt-stamped, and having a steel clasp. It was open. A roll of bills lay beside it on the floor. A few gold and

silver pieces showed in one of the pockets, which was lined with leather. The landlord looked at it covetously.

"You had better put it back, Lonny," said the wife, meaningly.

"Do you think I mean to steal it?" he retorted angrily.

"Some one else might," she replied gently.

"I guess I'm the landlord here," he pompously rejoined, "and it's my place to take care of this money till somebody comes to claim it. It's more than likely we'll need some of it for expenses, anyhow."

He put the money in his pocket and went down the stairs with much show of offended dignity. As soon as he was gone his wife looked eagerly about the room. Noticing something in the hand that lay across the woman's lap, she stooped and took from it a little leather-covered case. She touched a spring and glanced hastily at the contents. At the same moment she heard her husband's voice in the room below announcing the death of their lodger. Then came footsteps toward the stairs. She walked quickly to the head of the bed and dropped the case into a crevice between one of the logs and the rough "chinking" that half-filled the space

between their rounded edges. The wind had filled this space with light particles of snow, in which the case sank and was hidden. When her husband returned to the room followed by several of the guests, she was bending over the bed seeking to arouse the sleeping child. After a moment she took him in her arms and went down the stairs to her own room. From that moment she cared for him as tenderly as if he had been her own child.

Of course there was an inquest, and of course the inquest revealed nothing that was not patent at a glance. In fact, there did not seem to be much more to be learned. There were no marks of violence and no trace of struggle. The door was locked upon the inside, and there was no other means of ingress. A method of self-destruction was at least suggested, and there was no suspicion of foul play. The physician who came from the county seat, in attendance upon the coroner, said it was evident that death had resulted either from poison administered by the deceased herself or from heart-disease; he was inclined to the latter hypothesis. He did not consider an autopsy necessary, and frankly stated that even if he should make one he would be unable to distinguish between these two

causes. Some further inquiry was made rather to satisfy public curiosity, and learn, if possible, the residence and domestic relations of the deceased, than for the purpose of discovering the manner of her death. Then the rough jurymen, having viewed tenderly and reverently the fair remains, and expressed their pity for the bereaved boy, duly found that Mrs. Matilda E. Evans, whose residence was to the jurors unknown, had died from causes to the jurors likewise unknown. So the verdict stands upon the record still. Yet people shook their heads over what was revealed, and puzzled their brains over what was unexplained. In truth there was little learned by the inquest which was not already known ; and that little was very far from being satisfactory to the gossips of the vicinity.

A passenger who stopped at the Inn remembered seeing the deceased standing at the window of her room as the stage drove up, and finding her peering into his face as he stepped out upon the porch. She seemed to be watching for some one to arrive, and was evidently disappointed that the stage brought only a letter. She had said nothing to indicate such a thing, but the landlady judged that she expected her husband. The change in her demeanor as

she returned to her room was so apparent as to call forth a remark from one of the loungers in the public-room in reference to it.

After a brief conversation with his mother, Jack had gone to the room of the strange lady, and remained there something less than half an hour. No one about the Inn had seen him since he passed through the public-room after leaving her chamber. This was not later than seven o'clock. She usually sat up late, seldom retiring before ten, judging from the light in her room. Some of those in the public-room thought they heard her walking about at a very late hour that night. Her trunk had been moved from its accustomed place against the wall, and one of them was confident that he heard it dragged over the floor as late as ten o'clock at least. It was found open hardly an arm's length from the chair in which she sat. Its contents had evidently been recently overhauled, but without haste. The clothes and books taken from it were neatly piled at either end. The fly-leaves had been torn out of all the books but one, — a gilt-edged copy of the New Testament, in which was written: "Ozro Evans, born Sept. 10, 1818. From his mother." The landlady had seen enough of her lodger's

handwriting to enable her to identify this inscription. It was not a recent entry.

Though the deceased was dressed, the bed had unquestionably been occupied. It was thought she might have opened her frock and lain down beside the child to induce him to go to sleep, she herself intending, for some reason, to rise and resume her clothing. The boy had been ailing for a few days, and his mother had given him medicine, — the landlady did not know whether it was laudanum or not. The day before she had dressed him very carefully, and seemed anxious to keep him awake until the stage arrived. She had herself been much excited all day, seeming to be unusually happy. The child had the mother's watch in his hand with the chain about his neck. The landlady said this was a customary method of putting him to sleep.

The landlord was excited and effusive. He showed the money, and explained why he had taken charge of it. There was something over three hundred dollars. He was ready to deliver it, he said, to any one authorized to receipt for it, less reasonable charges.

The landlady answered the questions asked her at the inquest, slowly and carefully, but

volunteered no information. Really, she knew nothing of the woman's history or connections. She was sure the deceased had come from the East, but had no knowledge from what State. She did not remember hearing Mrs. Evans say anything about her husband, but thought he was somewhere at the West, and that there had been an estrangement between them. The deceased had once shown her a lock of hair in the back of a cameo brooch, and said it was her husband's. As to the conversation with Jack the night before, the landlady said he had told her immediately after the departure of the stage that he had a message of importance for Mrs. Evans and must see her at once. She told him to go and deliver it, as she was busy with her household cares, it being Saturday night, and unable, therefore, to go herself. Her son was not accustomed to go to the room of the deceased, and there was no intimacy between them. She did not think he had ever been in the room before during the lady's stay at the Inn. This testimony excited some remark, and was given with emphasis.

One letter, and only one, was found in the room of the deceased. It bore date of the day previous, and was in these words:—

M. E. E.

THE reports of your conduct at the country inn where you are staying satisfy me that you are incorrigible. I shall make no further effort to reclaim you from the ways of sin. I send a package by the landlord's son, which will be the last you will ever hear of him who has the misfortune to be your husband. A sum will be deposited for you with my bankers each year, which may be drawn as you require. I should pray for you if I were not satisfied that you are of those elected to eternal wrath.

A. E.

It was written in a bold angular hand that comported well with its harsh, fanatic tone, and contained a postscript in these words : —

“ If you choose to put the child in the care of some godly person, resigning all control over him yourself, my bankers will provide for his nurture until he is old enough to be put to some honest vocation.”

So the woman's good name was at the same time both avouched and assailed. The marriage-ring upon her finger was shown to be no lie, and the imputation of the letter was too vague to do more than react upon the writer, whose sternness was universally held to be only sanctimonious cruelty. All pitied the beautiful lady whom rumor had been only too ready to blame, and the whole neighborhood attended her fu-

neral, and every one remarked upon the peaceful beauty of the dead lady's face. She was buried between two trees that grew on the edge of the "Gulf" that ran back of the Inn, the nearest burying-ground being two miles away, the roads almost impassable, and the weather very severe. The landlady suggested this spot as the place of interment, because it had been a favorite resort of their unfortunate guest during her stay at the Inn. Very often during the pleasant autumn weather she had passed almost the entire day upon the wooded crest, sitting in a niche in the side of a great rock, engaged with her needle or her book, or idly looking off on the bright lake, while the two children — her son and the landlady's little daughter — played among the painted leaves at her feet. So she was buried there, and the great boulder that lay beside the path leading down into the cañon was her only headstone.

Two things puzzled the gossips of the countryside, — the fact that no jewels were found among the dead woman's effects, and Jack Button's disappearance.

The landlord denied all knowledge of any jewelry belonging to the deceased except the cameo brooch. A pedler, who was a guest that night, was very confident that he had seen

diamonds in her ears when she came down to the porch on the arrival of the stage. Being a Jew, he was considered an unusually good authority upon the subject. Opinion was divided afterward as to whether Mrs. Button was questioned about this matter at the inquest or not. At all events, nothing more was learned with regard to it. The result was a general belief that the landlord had appropriated the rich woman's jewels; that his wife at least suspected this unlawful conversion, and was silent in regard to it to save the family from disgrace. Public sympathy set very strongly in her favor, and the landlord was soon made to feel himself tabooed. Somehow the loss of the jewels was in the public mind connected with the disappearance of the landlord's son; and it soon became current gossip that father and son had appropriated a fortune in precious stones from their dead guest. Of course the details of this did not come immediately to the landlord's ears; but he soon knew he had somehow become an object of suspicion. Travellers refused to smoke the pipe of peace under the roof of the Inn, despite the invitation of the aboriginal upon its sign; the newly established rival, "Corey's," but a mile away, became prosperous as "Button's" declined; and

soon "Hawk's" only customers were a few roystering companions of the neighborhood, and now and then a belated wayfarer.

To the events already narrated was soon added another, which in the opinion of the neighborhood, at least, very strongly confirmed the general suspicion of the landlord's guilt. Not long after the funeral the landlady removed her personal effects from the apartment she had occupied with her husband on the west side of the public-room, and with her baby and the stranger-child took possession of one in the eastern extension. This room had a closet across the end under the overhanging second story of the original building, and a window that looked out upon the porch just beyond the door of the public-room. It was the one her son had always occupied, and her appropriation of it was looked upon as evidence that she did not expect him to return, — that she had indeed good reason to know he would not return. From that time on, the pale sad face of the landlady was often seen at this window, and it was noticed that she never left the room without locking the door. People pitied her openly, and shook their heads cautiously when they mentioned her husband. She said nothing of what had happened: her hus-

band could talk of nothing else. It was before the days of professional detectives ; but the inhabitants of Button's Inn were very closely watched. Nothing further was discovered, however. The landlady neglected none of her duties, though she added to them the care of the dead woman's child, whom she had legally bound to herself, — not to her husband. The lawyer who had attended to the matter for her doubted its legality, she being a married woman ; but she insisted, and had her way. After a time the landlord transferred the title to the Inn to a trustee for the benefit of his wife. This was generally thought to be an express condition of her silence in regard to what had occurred, but in fact it was done of his own motion and without his wife's knowledge. It did not serve, however, as he no doubt hoped it would, to change their relations. She continued to perform her duties with exemplary faithfulness, but made no advances towards a reconciliation, — if, indeed, there had been any rupture. This was what the gossips were most puzzled to decide. In a sense, she had separated herself from her husband ; he was never seen in her room, and she appeared to take special precautions to exclude him from it. On the other hand, there was no

complaining, and apparently no bickering. She treated him with coolness it is true, but with every outward show of respect. Always of a serious cast of mind as we have seen, she now became most assiduous and untiring in her religious duties. The great Bible which had been almost her only dowry was seldom out of her hands when she could command leisure for its perusal. The strange lady's books were carefully arranged upon a shelf in her room, but she rarely glanced at their pages. She had become a religious recluse, who had made her son's room a penitential retreat, and kept always with her the dead woman's boy as a reminder of the sin she sought to expiate for others. This was the interpretation the gossips put upon her conduct. Certain it was that, without seeming to do so, she kept a close watch upon her husband's movements, — her manner toward him changing from one of timid obedience to constant watchfulness. It was generally understood to be in her behalf that the circuit-rider, who preached every fourth Sabbath at the little country church two miles away, always asked the prayers of God's people for one in deep affliction. Some pitied, and others blamed her for not telling all they thought she knew; but there was none who

did not love the sad-eyed woman who would not lose her hold upon her husband, nor abandon hope of his salvation.

The next spring, when the ice broke up, the body of a man was found floating in the harbor. It was unrecognizable. Some thought it the body of Jack Button ; others declared that it was not. Among the latter was his father. It was observed, however, that when the mother was shown a lock of hair from the head of the drowned man she was much agitated, and placed it between the leaves of her Bible, which lay always on a little stand by the window where she kept daily watch, — for what none knew. As to whether it was or was not the body of her son, she expressed no opinion. The inquest pronounced the body unknown, and it was decently interred on the banks of the lake near the light-house tower. Not long after, the grave was enclosed with a neat paling, — at whose expense was never known.

The room above the public was never occupied after the lady's death. Naturally enough guests did not fancy a chamber with such associations. Besides that, it soon obtained the reputation of being haunted. Strange sounds were heard to issue from it ; lights gleamed in the

window at night ; and more than once a white-robed figure had been seen standing at the casement. On Saturday nights moans and supplications were often heard by those in the room beneath, followed sometimes by screams and the falling of a heavy body upon the floor of the haunted chamber. More than once at such times parties had rushed up from the public-room only to find the suspected apartment entirely vacant, and everything in it undisturbed. When the storm raged from the northwest in the summer-time the room was sure to be brilliantly lighted, yet there were never any traces of occupancy. Finally, the furniture was removed and the door nailed up. Still the manifestations continued. The excellence of its entertainment, curiosity, and even pity for the woman who was the manager of the Inn still gave it some custom ; but it was the farm rather than the tavern on which she relied for the maintenance of the household and the little savings she so jealously hoarded, — none knew for what. After a time her husband's dissolute habits absorbed not only the little surplus, but piece after piece of the farm itself found its way down the throat of the sorely beset landlord.

That Lonny Button finding himself shunned, suspected, and his business almost destroyed, did not go entirely to the bad was due solely to his wife's loyalty. Though she directed everything, she did it always in his name, never allowing any imputation to fall upon him even of neglect. He was a proud man in his way, and would not descend to explanation or excuse,—least of all to his wife. After a time he grew savage and morose, and though not often helplessly intoxicated, was very rarely sober. He frequently declared that he was tired of keeping a haunted house and being an object of suspicion to his neighbors.

One stormy night in the fall of the next year the light was shining in the window above the public-room, and a white figure was dimly visible behind it. Two of the landlord's companions returning with him from the harbor pointed it out to him with blanched faces. He rolled off his horse, swearing that he would endure such things no longer, went into the house and returned with his rifle. He had it loaded with a silver bullet in anticipation of such an opportunity. Resting his piece against the body of a tree, he took deliberate aim and fired. The watchers heard the ball crash through the glass ;

the light disappeared, and shrill, heart-breaking screams burst on their ears. They fled in affright, leaving the unhappy man insensible at the foot of the tree where he had fallen. The domestics and the guests of the Inn were aroused by the turmoil. The landlady was found writhing and foaming in uncontrollable convulsions. When she recovered consciousness, she was unable to speak aloud. The physician said it was the effect of excitement; the neighbors attributed it to a supernatural cause. There was always something uncanny about the gray-haired, voiceless woman afterward. The next day the haunted chamber was opened, and found to contain no sign of the occurrence except a broken glass and a bullet-hole in the roof. That night a schooner was wrecked on the bar, and all the crew but one perished. The survivor said they were making the harbor, steering by a light which one of the crew said was in the window of Button's Inn. Keeping this in range with the harbor light, the helmsman said they would make the offing, despite the heavy sea from the west. When it went out they had no landmark by which to lay their course, and in a few moments grounded on the very end of the long bar, and went to pieces.

Somehow Lonny Button became possessed with the idea that the sailor who held the rudder was his son. After that he enlarged the windows in the public-room, and on stormy nights took care that they should always be lighted by a glowing fire.

So the years went on, the silent woman and the melancholy man growing each more marked in their respective characteristics ; and with them Ozro Evans and Dotty Button had grown up side by side. The house was still an inn, and still the room over the public was called the "haunted chamber ;" but much of the horror that once attached to the house had given place to curiosity, and Dotty's charms were bringing back to the hostel something of the old-time popularity. The fortunes of the Inn had been at a very low ebb ; sickness had impaired the landlady's capacity ; Lonny, grown old and querulous, had long since ceased to have any care of its affairs, and the fact that the Inn was still in operation was in a large degree due to the exertions of the young man Ozro Evans.

ONCE FOR ALL.

"IT'S no use, Ozro," the girl spoke firmly, looking frankly up into her lover's face. "We have been children together, and have always loved each other; but all that must end, and it may as well end here and now."

"But won't you hear me, Dotty?" asked the young man, reaching out his hand as if to lay it on her shoulder.

"No," said the girl, nervously taking a step backward and putting aside his hand half rudely, — "no, I won't listen to you! Don't you see, Ozro," she added impatiently, "I *can't* listen to you? I've been over this matter again and again, in my own mind. I know all you would say, all there is to be said — and — and — *more too!*" she ejaculated with a sudden fierceness.

She put her hand hastily to her throat, as if to arrest the sob that came in spite of her effort, and continued: —

"It's hard, of course, — just as hard for me as it is for you, I'll say that. But there's no

use of waiting or hoping; there's nothing to wait for and nothing to hope for."

"But, Dotty —"

"Don't stop me!" putting up her hand with an imperative gesture; "I've got something to say, and I came here to say it — once for all."

Her face was pale, but her dark eyes shone with the steady light of a fixed purpose. Her mouth, close shut, showed the rugged firmness implied by her ancestral name.

"You will come of age to-morrow, Ozro, and go away. Yes, you will — you must. Why should you? Because I say so. Yes, I know you have always obeyed me. Are you sorry for it now? You have served me, fought for me, suffered for me. Do you think I don't know —"

She took hold of a sapling that grew near, as if to steady herself.

"Do you think I don't know? You would jump over the bank there in a minute if I asked it; and—and—I would do it for you, too, Ozro."

Her voice trembled, but she went on speaking hurriedly, as if time pressed.

"But it would n't do any good. Our fates seem to have got so tangled up with others that we can't live for ourselves. You know how it

is. There's my father — oh, I know you would treat him well for my sake, but one can't go on forgiving always. And there's Mă," — her voice grew soft as she pronounced the tender diminutive, with her curious foreign accent.

"But I love her as well as you do," burst in the young man.

"I know you do, I know you do, Ozro," tears coming in spite of herself, "but she can't live on love any more than we."

"But I will work," he protested.

"Of course," she replied. "Have n't you always worked? I'm sure we'd all have been in the poorhouse if it had n't been for you; and we're only just outside the door as it is. Don't you suppose I see how things have been going on? You've done a man's work for years, — ever since you left school, — and more'n any other man would have done, working and contriving every which way; and what has it all come to? The farm's been growing smaller'n smaller, a piece split off or chopped off every year, till there's only forty acres left of all the old Boutonne tract; and that's mortgaged for more than its worth, and the money past due at that. And what is there besides? Nothing!"

"The Inn's doing better lately," ventured Ozro.

"It's helping us live, that's all," said the girl, emphatically. "And that's all its done ever since —" she hesitated a moment, and then added apologetically — "since the trouble came; and it won't ever do any better. It's seen its best days, and I would n't wonder if about its last days, too. If it was n't for Mr. Dewstowe I doubt if it would pay to keep the door open now. People don't travel by the same lines they used to, and we're off the line."

"If you knew what — what I can do, Dotty," said the young man, anxiously.

"Do? What could you do with us all hanging on to you? You'd better have a mill-stone about your neck at once. I tell you, Ozro, you've had enough of hard times, and I ain't going to have anything to do with making your lot any worse. I'd jump right down the bank there, before I'd marry you and be a drag on you, as I'd have to be."

She shuddered as she pointed down the precipice by which they stood. The young man placed himself carelessly between her and the brink. She saw the movement, and looked him straight in the eye as she said excitedly: —

"I would ; and more 'n that, I'd see you do it, before I'd have the spoiling of your life on my hands. If you go off west somewhere by yourself, you'll do well. There ain't no doubt of that, Ozro, and you deserve it."

"And you?"

"Never mind about me."

"You'll marry Dewstowe, I suppose."

"Well, suppose I do. I've got to take care of Pă and Mă,"—the accent suited the softened tone; "they're getting old and trying, especially Pă. I can't neglect them, and it won't do to have them miss what they've always been accustomed to."

"Dewstowe's got money, and could provide for them," said the young man, meditatively.

"Yes," said Dotty, in a tone not altogether expressive of satisfaction.

"He's a smart man, too," continued Ozro.

"Yes, smart enough," she assented, as if she did not altogether like the turn the conversation had taken.

"But he does not love you as I do, Dorothy."

"Don't call me that, Ozro!" she exclaimed, her lips quivering, and tears springing to her eyes. "We can't have everything in this world."

She tried to laugh, but it was a dismal failure.

"Can't we leave this matter open a while, Dotty?"

He had put his arm around her, and she leaned against his shoulder, weeping silently.

"No, we can't — we *must n't*, I mean." There were sobs between her words. "You are twenty-one, and you must go away, and — and — I — I must do the best I can."

"I believe we were made for each other, Dotty," he said tenderly.

He had worked himself to the brink of the chasm as they talked, and she had given back step by step, until now they stood in the edge of the tinted undergrowth that fringed the crest. They had been so absorbed in their conversation that they were quite unconscious that they were in full view of the Inn and of the road that ran by its door.

"Don't you think so, Dotty?"

The only answer was a sigh of relief. He bent down and kissed her. She did not mind it. He had kissed her ever since she could remember.

The crack of a whip sounded from the highway, and a pedler's wagon, drawn by four sleek horses and resplendent with gay colors, came into view around the curve of the hill. She

raised her head and glanced quickly at the approaching equipage.

"Let me go," she said hastily, trying to release herself.

"Why?"

"That's Mr. Dewstowe."

"Well?"

"Don't be foolish, Ozro! Let me go — *please!*"

"Not till you promise me something, Dotty," holding her yet closer.

"What is it?" She struggled to free herself, but his arms were like iron.

"Promise me you will wait."

"Oh, I can't."

"You must!"

There was no doubting his determination. The only chance was to make terms.

"How long?"

"A year."

"Impossible! The place will be sold long before that."

"Till Christmas, then."

"What is the use of waiting? It will only be the same thing over again."

"Have n't I deserved that much?"

"Of course," angrily. "It is not a question

of what you deserve, but — you won't ask anything more?"

"Not another day."

"And then — what?"

"If I cannot remove your objections I will go away and leave you free." The young man spoke very solemnly.

The girl glanced over her shoulder. The four horses with the yellow van behind them were dashing down the hill to the Inn.

"I promise," she said hastily.

The young man loosed his clasp and they stepped back into the path, out of sight of the road.

"What made you do so?" she asked reproachfully, as he kissed her again. "You know it will be of no use. It can't — ever — be — Ozro Evans, and you know it! Why not have the matter over, and be done with it?"

She stepped back and looked up at him wearily. "Only think how much trouble there has been on account of — of what has happened! Suppose my brother should return?"

"Your brother? Don't be foolish, Dotty. He is dead — long ago."

"No, he is n't, Ozro."

"No? Why do you think so?"

"I am sure of it from what Mă says when she prays for him. You know she's been getting her voice back a little of late; but she has been so long out of the habit of using it that she never thinks of speaking above a whisper; and she has prayed in a whisper so long I don't s'pose she knows the difference now. But I can't help hearing her, and she always prays for Jack." Her voice sank as she made this declaration.

"There is nothing strange in that."

"Not if he is alive of course."

"Nor if he were dead, either."

"Why, Ozro! Do you think Mă would pray for any one who is dead?"

"I don't know — I suppose not."

"Suppose! You know it would be just the wickedest thing in the world. He is alive, Ozro, and she knows it, and that is the reason she prays for him."

"Well, I'm sure I'm glad of it," said he, heartily. "I hope he will come home, — and the sooner the better."

"No, you don't, for there was something — I don't know what — about him and your mother."

"See here, Dotty," said the young man, gravely, for the first time showing signs of an-

ger, "I don't want to hear any more of that nonsense. Two people's lives have been spoiled, and at least two others made to suffer a great deal, because my father was brute enough to break my mother's heart while she was staying at the Inn, and people were malicious enough to talk about it,—for that is all there is of it. Poor mother!" he said, glancing toward the grave, a few steps away, "I don't doubt it's been a great trouble to her, even in heaven, to know how much sorrow has come out of her misfortune. But I don't think any ill was done or intended toward the poor woman by any one but the brute who was unworthy of her love."

"Hush, Ozro!" said Dotty, "don't speak so of your father."

"My father! I will never call my mother's murderer my father. *Your* father has been *my* father, Dotty; not always overkind, and having a curious antipathy against me, arising, no doubt, from the foolish gossip of the neighborhood. I have no idea that any one bearing his name ever did my mother any harm, and they have certainly shown great kindness to me."

"But, Ozro," said the girl, gazing at him in wide-eyed surprise, "there is the — the ghost!"

She lowered her voice instinctively as she

spoke the words. She little imagined the effect they would produce.

The young man burst into a laugh that was a perfect tornado of mirth. The cachinnatory roar echoed and re-echoed up and down the narrow glen. He laughed still louder, and, staggering backward, caught hold of a sapling to save himself from falling over the cliff, as he witnessed the consternation his outburst had produced. The tears stood in his eyes when finally he endeavored to control his mirth, and between convulsive relapses attempt an explanation.

"That's it, Dotty; I knew the ghost was at the bottom of it! I—I—" He broke down, and went off again into uncontrollable laughter.

"What has made so much trouble to others seems to be a very funny thing to you," said Dotty, trying to speak with freezing dignity.

"That's — just — it — as your father says, Dotty," he responded, still laughing. "The ghost of Button's Inn! I don't suppose anybody ever laughed at it before, — at least, not so as to be heard. It's enough to kill one to think how sacred that ghost has been held. Why, only think, Dotty, it's had the best room in the Inn all to itself for eighteen years, and has n't paid a cent!"

"Ozro Evans!" exclaimed the innkeeper's daughter, in angry excitement. "I should think you would be ashamed. Right here beside your mother's grave, too!"

She was weeping, though she hardly knew why.

The young man was sober in an instant.

"Why, Dotty, I did n't mean —"

"Don't talk to me! I'm sure it's a good thing we can't ever think of being more to each other than we are. Anybody so heartless as you —"

She broke off suddenly. A horn sounded from the Inn. It was the usual summons for any one that was wanted at the house.

"I declare," said Ozro, called back to everyday affairs by the sound, "I forgot all about Dewstowe's horses."

He began hastily to gather up his load. "Let's go," he said, seeing that she made no movement to accompany him.

"I will come — presently," she replied, with a blush.

"All right," he laughed, interpreting the blush to suit himself. "But you'll not forget your promise?"

"No."

"Well, good-by," said he, gayly, kissing her cheek. "I'll tell Dewstowe you're coming."

He dodged the blow she aimed at his ear, and was off toward the house, laughing and whistling as he went.

"Seems to be in good spirits, don't he?" said the pedler to the landlord, as he stood beside his horses at the watering-trough.

"That's what's the matter, Dewstowe," exclaimed the old man, shaking his finger at the pedler, "that's jest what's the matter. 'Tain't nateral, you see — 'tain't nateral!"

"I'm not so sure about that," muttered the pedler to himself, as he checked up the night-wheeler lest he should drink too freely.

A KNIGHT OF THE ROAD.

MR. DEWSTOWE was one of the most enterprising and successful of the peripatetic merchants of a generation ago. He was not only a merchant, but a horseman, and something of a dandy as well. He prided himself on driving the finest team to the nattiest turnout on the road. The team consisted of two iron-gray wheelers, heavy and sleek, and a span of bay leaders, as lively and trim as the famous stock of the Green Mountains could afford. He knew the value of a horse, and no stage-driver in the country managed a four-in-hand better than the keen-eyed, firm-handed, gloved and scented owner of the wonderful array of drawers and boxes mounted on stout wheels, locked with a hundred keys, ornately painted, and lettered —

J. DEWSTOWE,

DRY GOODS,

New York.

A heavy iron railing went around the upper edge, to which was securely padlocked such light merchandise as weather and rough usage were not likely to injure. A comfortable extension top might be raised at will to protect the driver from sun or storm, and beside him on the blue-cushioned seat sat always a bull-dog, milk-white, broad-chested, pink-eyed, and cropped, his fore-shortened upper jaw disclosing an imposing array of ivory, and a mouth his owner was accustomed to describe as "a perfect rosebud." Withal his skin was like a glove, and he had never turned his back — or more properly his brief apology for a tail — upon a foe.

This outfit was a part of the owner's stock in trade. He had worked his way up from a mere pedler following the tow-path and the cross-roads with a pack on his back, to the foremost place among the merchant-travellers of his time, by close attention to his business and a careful study of human nature. He knew to a cent how much his horses, his dog, and his jaunty clothing cost, and how much they were worth in his business. Though he liked the distinction they gave him and the easy independent life he led, he would have discarded them all on the instant had they ceased to be

profitable. He was likely to do so in a short time anyhow, for the fortune he had acquired was getting beyond what might be profitably employed in his business. He had ceased long ago to handle any but the finest and costliest goods, and had now half-a-dozen men in his employ with outfits only a little less pretentious than his own. He was already contemplating the sale of the whole, preliminary to engaging in a new kind of forwarding business which he believed to promise remarkable opportunities.

He would probably have consummated this change before, had he not, something like a year previous, fallen in love with Lonny Button's daughter. He was not a bad fellow, — keen, shrewd, and bright, and in downright earnest in his love. It was not, perhaps, of the highest type. He was not sighing or sentimental, but he was bold, sincere, and confident. To use his own language, he saw the girl's "capabilities," and knew that the saucy, piquant beauty was exactly the wife he wanted for the head of his establishment when he should leave the road and "show those city fellows how to make money." He was no fool and no niggard. He wanted everything about him to be *A-1*; and Dotty was exactly the style of article he required for

a wife. He had laid furious siege not only to her heart but to her father's favor, finding no difficulty in capturing the unbounded admiration of the weak old man, awakening the apprehension of the mother, and rousing the envy of all the girls in the neighborhood by his attentions to the coquettish young mistress of the haunted Inn. For Dotty *was* its mistress; the shrewd dealer saw that plainly enough, and the fact added to his estimate of her value not a little. There was, no doubt, a strong commercial flavor in his love. It smacked not of the shop, but of the road; yet it was true and honest, and would stand the test far better than much of the "wild-cat" money of that day.

For a year the enterprising trader had stopped for Sunday at the Inn every time his business would permit, and oftentimes perhaps to its detriment. A drive of thirty or forty miles was nothing to him by day or by night, however, especially as he believed himself to be making good progress in his wooing. He had not been over-modest in speaking of himself; yet to do him justice he had only told the truth of the past, and his prescience of the future fell far short of what the reality afterward proved. That there was something about this dashing,

adventurous, and successful mercantile nomad that attracted the spirited girl there could be no doubt. She was fond of Ozro, who had been to her a servant and a brother, — how fond she hardly knew till she began to think of another, — but he was awkward and shy ; and though strong and skilful in all physical sports, and perhaps in the abstract quite as good-looking as the merchant-pedler, he lacked the advantage which the prestige of good clothes, success, and wealth must ever be to the lover who does not prize such incidents too highly. For some months Ozro had been unusually silent and moody, realizing how great were the odds against him. He knew, too, the necessities of the family ; and so true was his love that he could not bear to think that it should bring anything of deprivation or hardship to its object. Indeed, until the scene we have described, he had purposely refrained from pressing his suit. When it came to the point, however, his earnestness swept away all barriers ; and Dotty, who thought her mind already made up, and had half-promised her rich suitor an answer on this visit, found herself more at sea than ever. Or rather she had found that her admiration for the rich trader and her desire to serve her parents in their extremity were not

able to smother her love for the devoted companion of her youth.

That night the landlady called Ozro into her room, and the two talked long and earnestly, — the woman speaking in whispers, and the young man listening with respectful attention. Much that she told him he already knew, but for the first time he learned that night that the unfortunate woman's long estrangement from her husband had been on account of the wrong and injury she believed her spouse had done to him.

"I hate to tell ye, Ozro," she whispered sadly, "but Lonny Button robbed ye of all your mother had to leave. It was n't the money only, but the trinkets, — diamonds they say they were. He took 'em, Ozro, — he and Jack. I don't know what ever possessed him to do it, but I 'spect Jack had got into trouble, — in fact I know he had, — and Lonny probably took 'em to help him out. He's my husband, Ozro, and I hate to say a word agin him; but jestice is jestice, an' I've gone contrary to the Lord's will too often in my day to be willin' to cover up any longer what I 'spose I never ought to have hid. I don't know how much he got for 'em," she continued, "but they must have been worth a deal of money. There were three of 'em, —

two for the ears, and one in a little bit of narrer-edged pin that did n't seem to be nothin' at all when you looked straight at it, only a gold line holdin' a drop of dew in the middle; for they looked more like dewdrops than anythin' else. They wa'n't bigger 'n a good-sized pea,—scarcely as big as that, as I remember 'em; but she told me,—I mean yer mother, Ozro; who, if her heart was set on the vain things of this world, was a good an' patient woman who never made any complaint with her lot,—she told me that each one of them little bits of white stones cost a deal of money. I don't see what people want of such things. They are pretty of course, but I'd a' most as soon have a handful of pebbles from the beach. Of course I told my husband about 'em, but I don't think he ever saw 'em till that night afore she died. I was afraid he might find 'em afterwards; an' I knew if he did, his covetousness would be sure to git the better on him,—for he is awful covetous, Ozro, awful! So I snatched 'em up while he was n't by, an' tucked 'em in a hole in the house-log, an' put a piece of brown paper over 'em.

“She died with 'em in her hand, Ozro, which I suppose some folks would have counted a jedgment on her pride. But I knew that rich as she

had been an' handsome as she was, your mother did n't set no great store by them little shiny stones. She was a woman of the world, and delighted in the things of this world no doubt. That's probably what set yer father so terribly agin her. I think he was a pious man, but I'm afraid he was a hard man too, — one that made duty only a handy name for his own unregenerate impulse. But it ain't for me to jedge, Ozro. He that calls on the name of the Lord must be judged by the Lord. He's gone to his account, an' she's gone to hers. Whatever there was between 'em has been settled by One that makes no mistakes. But however worldly-minded your mother was, I knew she had n't set up way into the night — an' she all alone here among strangers that did n't know nor care anything about the vally of such things — jest to look at an' gloat over them little bits of shinin' vanities. She did n't go out of this world with 'em in her hand because her heart was sot on 'em — not a bit on 't. I don't know ez I ever heard her say anything about bein' a professor, Ozro, but she was a good woman, your mother was; and I've heard her prayin' for you — always for you, for she did n't ever seem to care for herself — as no one but a real Christian can pray, — as if she

expected her prayers to be heard an' answered too. So I knew, jest as well as if I'd been there an' she'd told me with her own lips, that she had n't died with them trinkets in her hand, and her money scattered round on the floor beside her, from any feeling of vanity. It was n't in her nature to do that sort of thing. I knew she had 'em in her hand for some good purpose; and she must have known the end was near, and meant 'em to be saved for you. That was my conceit, anyhow, an' that's why I hid 'em away. I may have been wrong. I've thought, sometimes, I must have been, an' that the Lord has punished me for my presumption; but what I did was done honestly an' in His fear, an' the end is in His hand. It was a good while before I had a chance to go and look for 'em, and then they were gone.

"I'd been afraid about Jack before, but I had n't any suspicion of my husband till then. He acted bad enough about the money, but that was n't much, and I knew we could make it up. Besides, it was worth something to care for you; though you have made that good about a hundred times over, since you have grown up. I've saved up a little for ye, lad, so you won't come twenty-one quite empty-handed. 'T wont make

up what you 've lost through them that bear my name, but it's better 'n nothing, an' is all I've been able to do. Some of it has come in a very strange way, but one that is no mystery to me. It gives me great joy, for it tells me that somewhere on the face of the earth — I don't know where nor how — a soul has repented of its sin, an' is a tryin' to undo the evil it once wrought. I trust we won't always be your debtors, an' that the time may come when you can say that all accounts are squared between you and all of our name."

"I am sure that is true, now," said the young man, earnestly; "your love has more than paid —"

"Love aint jestice, Ozro; an' kindness don't pay debts between them that are not of kin."

The gray-haired woman looked sternly at him, as she interrupted with relentless judgment on those whose wrong-doing she had so rigorously striven to expiate.

"I know you would n't ever make complaint, Ozro, nor have hard feelings toward *me*; but before I can ask you to forgive them that's done the wrong, I'm bound to let you see that some that bear the name has done their best to set it right."

Her manner was so imperious, so full of proud humility, that he could think of nothing to say in reply. After a moment she took the candle, went to the closet under the overhang, and returned with a buckskin bag, from which she emptied a quantity of coin in her lap, and began to count it, laying it in little piles upon her knee. The young man's eyes sparkled at the sight. When she had counted fifty dollars he reached out his hand and touched her arm. She paused and looked up at him in surprise through the great glasses set in heavy German-silver rims, which she had donned to enable her to read the value of the coins.

"Stop, Mother," he said gently. He had always addressed her thus, after the memory of his own mother grew dim. For some reason she would never allow him, even when a child, to call her Ma, as his little playmate did.

"Oh, there's more'n that," she said with a smile of satisfaction. It was her own saving, — the result of the most pinching economy for years, — and she was rather proud of the amount. "There ain't very far from five hundred dollars here."

"Why, Mother," exclaimed Ozro, "why have n't you used it instead of keeping it for me? You

have needed it so much!" There was reproach in his tone.

"Yes, we've needed it a great many times," said the old woman, thoughtfully. "A great many times," she repeated, as she snuffed the candle burning in the iron candlestick upon the table near her, — "more times than you'll ever know about, Ozro; but I did n't use it 'cause it was n't mine. I could n't make it all up; but I promised afore God to be a helpmeet to Lonny Button, an' I did n't see no way I could help him better 'n by trying to undo the wrong he had done to a little motherless boy, under his own roof-tree."

"I never could make out jest what made him do it. There never was an honest nor a kinder man than he up to that very day. I s'pose 't was too great a temptation. God knows, God knows!" she whispered reverently, shaking her head with sad uncertainty.

"I don't believe he took them," said the young man, emphatically.

"Oh, I heard him searching for 'em," she answered hopelessly.

"I don't believe he took them; I can't believe it," he reiterated.

"You think perhaps 't was Jack?" she asked,

wiping her spectacles on the corner of her coarse checked apron. "That would n't make it a bit better, — worse if anything. But 't was n't Jack. I thought so at first; but 't was n't him, — I'm satisfied of that; 't was n't him. I don't know. I've thought sometimes — but I don't know what I hain't thought. I know Jack did n't take 'em. He's done wrong enough, God knows, but he did n't do that. I don't doubt it was done for his sake, an' he may have been privy to it; but he did n't take 'em, — that I *know*." She sighed as she ceased speaking.

"It does n't make any difference, Mother," said the young man, taking her hand. It was a lean hard hand, with short blunted nails. The finger-ends were rough and the palm seamed by many years of toil. The young man held it between his own as tenderly as if it had been the girl's whose saucy laugh he heard upon the porch in conversation with his rival.

"Mother," he said earnestly, "I do not care what became of the jewels, or whether they were worth much or little. I do not think they could have been of any great value; and if they were, I have received payment in full in your care. Remember, you have given me a

better education than your own son received, — even better than you have given Dotty.”

“It was n’t what I wanted to make it, Ozro,” sighed the woman, smoothing back her gray hairs with the disengaged hand.

“Whatever it lacks I shall make good,” said he, cheerfully.

“But, Mr. Button — ” she said hesitatingly, “he — has n’t been — I don’t want to blame him, Ozro, but he’s been pretty hard on ye sometimes.”

“In words, Mother, only in words,” was the soothing reply.

“I do believe that’s so, Ozro,” she answered eagerly, “and I’m glad he hain’t been worse. You know how he is,” pityingly.

“I know all about it, Mother. I don’t think he really dislikes me ; but he thinks I have been the cause of your estrangement from him, and so has fallen into the habit of laying all his misfortunes to me.”

“It was n’t that, Ozro, — it was n’t that. He thought I was angry with him when I came to this room, and I won’t say I was n’t. He’s been a great trial to me, — a great trial. I tried to do right by him and do my duty to God also. I loved him, and I always have loved him, Ozro ;

but I'm a Christian woman, and when he took to drink and began to entice our son into bad ways, I could n't always speak cheerful. It was like cutting my heart out to see him leading that boy along the brink of ruin. Oh, I prayed till my knees were calloused like the bottom of your foot. I prayed and wept until it seemed as if there could be no God, or He would have heard me. But it was n't any use. It had to be, I s'pose.

"And then came this thing,—here in my own house, under my very eyes,—this horrible thing! I could n't say a word—not a word, for fear of something worse. You can't ever know what I've borne all these years, Ozro. And I have n't said a word—not a word, you know; I have n't blamed him, nor let anybody else blame him in my hearin'.

"I came to this room, Ozro, to save him; and I've stayed here to save him—his good name, I mean. I knew I was the only one that could do it, and I've done it. In all these years I have n't breathed a word to a living soul of what has been in my heart all the time. I prayed to God to help me, and He did help me, blessed be His name! You can't think how terrible it was. But when the load was getting

too heavy — when I was afraid every day that I should tell — God took away my voice. For this, which others thought an affliction, — for this I praise Him day and night.

“ Yes, I know it’s comin’ back,” she said, in answer to his look, speaking now in the harsh broken tone characteristic of one whose vocal chords have been for a long time unused. “ I know it. I’ve heard myself talkin’ more’n once lately, though I did n’t know my own voice at first ; and I take it as a sign from the Lord, — a sign that I must speak out at last, and keep silence no more.”

She drew her hand from his, and placing the money on the table started across the room. Then, as if she had changed her purpose, she came back, and placing her hand on the young man’s shoulder said : —

“ You and Dotty had a long talk up on the bank to-day. What did she say ? ”

“ About what ? ”

“ About marryin’ you. We may as well speak plain, Ozro. I know you love her, and she would love you too, if it was n’t for that miserable pedler followin’ her round.”

“ She does n’t love him, Mother.”

“ No,” said the woman, bitterly ; “ but she loves

his money and his fine clothes and his horses, perhaps even his dog. It's in the blood, Ozro, — covetousness and love for the things of this world. But she sha'n't do it, Ozro ! she sha'n't do it !”

“ But I tell you she does n't want to — if she can help it, that is.”

“ Oh, I know the human heart, Ozro, — I ought to know it, and I do know how desperately wicked it is !”

She walked up and down the room wringing her hands as she spoke.

“ See here, Mother, Dotty won't marry Mr. Dewstowe unless she believes it necessary for your comfort ; and if she believes that, she'll do it anyhow. I'm sure she loves me, but she thinks it is her duty to look out for you and her father ; and so do I. She has given me until Christmas to see if I can show any prospect that will justify her in refusing Mr. Dewstowe. That's fair, Mother, and I don't think we ought to make her duty any harder. I am going to try ; and if I fail — I can't say I'll give her up willingly, but I won't do anything to make it any harder for her. You wonder what I am going to do ?”

He pointed to the money on the table and continued : —

"I don't know as I can do anything, Mother; but if you will let me have fifty dollars of that, I will try. Perhaps I may have something to show that will put me on even terms with Mr. Dewstowe, and then Dotty will not hesitate—"

"Don't you believe it, boy, — don't you believe it," she whispered raspingly. "I don't doubt you may be right now, — I don't think she's clean gone yet, — but against Christmas comes he'll have her charmed worse 'n a black snake charms a bird. No, no, Ozro, I sha'n't risk it. You can have the money of course, it's all yours; but me and mine have done you harm enough already. No, take it all," she said, as he took the fifty dollars and handed the bag back to her. "You won't? Then I'll keep it for you. You talk mighty brave now, but you know 't would kill you to give her up, — or you 'd kill yourself as soon as you got beyond range of her knowledge, so 't she would n't ever know she 'd done it."

"Well, I suppose that runs in the blood," said Ozro, with a shudder.

"It's no such thing, Ozro, no such thing, and you must n't think so."

The woman paused before him, and looking up he saw that her face was pale, her eyes

of a glassy brightness, and her hands tightly clasped at her sides.

"I ain't a-going to trifle any more. Me and mine's done you harm enough, Ozro Evans, and I won't sit still and see Dotty playing with your love under any sort of pretence. Tomorrow you'll be twenty-one. My voice has come back to me jest in time. It's God's will that I should speak out, and I'm goin' to speak out,—to *you*, anyhow. I've carried the load long enough; now I'll give it to you, and let you spell me a while. I'm sure I don't care what you do with it,—whether you hold it or drop it. It's all one to me. I'm done with it."

"Why, Mother," exclaimed the young man in surprise, "what do you mean?"

She bent her face to his ear and whispered: "Your mother was killed!"

"What!" he exclaimed, springing up and seizing her wrists; "you don't mean—"

Her head fell forward, and he saw the even parting of her thin gray hair. Somehow it wakened in him an infinite pity. His grasp relaxed and his voice softened as he repeated his inquiry, though it still trembled with intense excitement.

"That's why I have stayed in this room," she whispered hoarsely.

"But you cannot mean—" He could not bring himself to complete the inquiry.

"Jack!" Her head sank still lower as she uttered the word.

The young man let go her hands, and she fell into a chair as if the power to hold herself erect had departed.

"Does — does — *she* know this?"

"Oh, Ozro!" sighed the woman, "I have lived all these years only to keep *any one* from knowing it! O God, forgive him! My son! My son!"

There were no tears in her eyes. The fountains of grief seemed to have been long dried up. She only wrung her hard, leathery hands and looked up with dry, hopeless appeal in the unwinking orbs.

"Poor Mother!" he said pityingly.

"It was all I could do," she said, humbly excusing herself, — "jest live and pray, and do what I could for you. It was n't much, Ozro, but it's been better 'n the poorhouse or — strangers. I hoped Dotty would marry you, an' so hide her brother's sin without ever knowing it. I would n't have told you then. But if

she thinks of marryin' another, you must know, and she too. She must learn how much wrong we've done you,—what reason you have to hate us all: there ain't no help for it now! When she knows you hold our good name—what there is left of it, at least—in your hands, she'll give up her ambitious notions, I'm sure she will. She's a good girl, Dotty is. I'm sorry there's any need of telling her."

The young man placed his hand upon her shoulder. She looked up at him pathetically, her lips moving as they often did without any sound issuing from them.

"She must never know," he said emphatically. "What you have guarded so long shall still be a secret."

"But—but—Jack? What'll you do about Jack?" she gasped, with a shudder.

"God deal with him!" said the young man, solemnly; "I am not called upon to open the grave."

He turned away from her, and walked up and down the narrow room, greatly agitated. The end of the wick fell over and the candle began to splutter. She snuffed it again, and looked keenly into his face. The light of youth had gone out of it. She went and stood before him,

her hands clasped, and her lips moving. He turned from his way, and passed by her unconsciously. He was thinking not so much of the crime as of the sorrow it had brought. He felt for this woman who had been a mother to him far more keenly than for the dead one, whom he doubted if he could remember at all. She thought he meant to avoid her.

"Ozro, I will tell all!"

He started as if waked out of a dream, and looked at her in amazement. Had she anything more to tell? Could it be that *she* was a party to the crime? His face blanched at the thought.

"All! What more is there?" he asked in a tone of terrified appeal.

The woman pressed one hand upon her heart and clasped the other tightly over it. She did not seem to see him, though her eyes were looking straight into his.

"Jack!" she gasped, — "he is not dead!"

"Not dead? But he was drowned when the 'Gull' went down!"

She shook her head.

"And is he still alive?"

"He was."

"When?"

"Five years ago."

"You saw him?"

She shook her head again.

"Did he write?"

Another shake.

He looked at her keenly. A new idea had come into his brain.

"Mother," he said, putting his hand on her shoulder. "Mother, it makes no difference. What you have concealed so long shall never pass my lips. If I lost one mother I gained another, and I could no more harm you than her. She sleeps in peace. Let the mystery of her death sleep with her. But are you sure you have made no mistake? Has not your imagination, your horror, led you to think—to believe things that do not exist?"

She still shook her head.

"But how do you know it?"

She did not seem to hear.

"It cannot be hid much longer," she whispered.

"Why not?" he asked, watching her closely.

"There's one other that knows!"

"Another!"

"The dead!" she whispered hoarsely, — "the dead that cannot rest in peace!"

His face lightened. She was evidently insane.

"There, there, Mother," he said, laying a hand upon her head soothingly, "don't be troubled; all will come right. You have let your mind dwell upon these matters until things have become real that never existed. I cannot believe what you say, and you must not believe it. Put it all away, Mother, and don't bother Dotty. She will always do what is right, as I am sure you have done."

His tenderness broke down the woman's obdurate endurance.

"Don't, Ozro, don't!" she whispered, while her lips trembled. "You are too good to me. I must tell the truth though, now. Perhaps I have waited too long. I am not crazy. I—I—could show you"—she hesitated. "Yes, I *must* show you. Look here!"

She turned quickly, went across the room, and opening the door of the closet under the overhang of the old log-house stepped within. As she did so a shrill, unearthly shriek, another, and another came from its depths.

For an instant the young man stood paralyzed by what he heard. Then he started forward, but before he could reach the closet door she

sprang out, closed it, and stood with her back against it, her hands clasped over her heart, her lips apart, but moving rapidly, though with strange rigidity of outline. He reached out his hands to grasp her arms, but she avoided them with a wriggling, sidewise motion, still keeping her back against the door. She seemed struggling to speak, but for a moment not a whisper could be heard. She could only shake her head pathetically as she looked beseechingly at him.

"Don't, Ozro, don't!" came at length, more a sibilant breath than a distinct sound. "Not now — not now! Some other time — some other time! O God! My punishment is greater than I can bear!"

She fell forward against him, rigid and lifeless except for the gasping, stertorous breath. Her eye-balls were convulsively upturned, and great bubbles formed within the half-opened lips. When they broke he saw that the worn, discolored teeth were shut close upon her tongue, which protruded slightly between them. Outside he could hear that all was in an uproar. He made haste to place her upon the bed and open the door, at which Dotty stood, knocking and calling. He had not noticed that it was

locked. Laying the unconscious form upon the bed, he turned the key.

"What is it?" asked the daughter, entering swiftly and closing the door behind her. The young man made a gesture toward the bed.

"She is having one of her spells," said the girl, coolly passing her hand under her mother's head and raising it so as to place a pillow underneath. "Lock the door, Ozro. Don't let any one in. She'll be better in a little while."

"I never knew — has she been so before?"

"Only once or twice," she answered quietly. "She won't like anybody round when she comes to. She's always out of her head then, and goes on dreadfully sometimes. You better go, I guess," she added anxiously. "I can take care of her."

He started toward the door reluctantly. She stopped him as his hand was on the latch.

"The screams, Ozro, — did she hear them?"

He turned and looked at her.

"Were n't they awful?" She shuddered as she spoke. He did not answer. She looked up at him and started suddenly as she caught his gaze. Removing her hand from her mother's brow she came quickly and laid it on his arm.

"Was it — Mă?" she asked breathlessly.
"Did — did *she* scream?"

"Your mother? Scream?" said the young man in a curious, absent manner. "No."

She looked at him keenly, shivered a little, and went back to the bedside. He opened the door and passed out.

A COMMERCIAL VIEW.

“DON’T you want to ride as far as the village, Evans?”

Dewstowe asked the question carelessly, as he stood beside his wagon smoking a cigar and drawing on his gloves the morning after the events of the last chapter.

“Well, I don’t know,” said Ozro, dubiously, as he hitched the leaders’ eveners to the end of the pole. “I thought of going that way.”

This hesitating acceptance of a proffered favor was a curious characteristic of the popular manners of that period. To have accepted a favor without offering an apology for so doing, would almost seem to have been considered inconsistent with the dignity of the American of that day. This resulted both from the universal instinct of self-maintenance, which made dependence upon another almost discreditable, and from that innate modesty of the American people to which scant justice has been done both by our own writers and the superficial observers

of foreign birth, who have mistaken a lack of formality for absence of feeling. To Dickens, Matthew Arnold, the authors of the endless series of novels founded on American mannerisms, and the whole host of mere surface-seers the ordinary American is simply a rough unmannerly cub, fit only to be made a mark for ridicule. To De Tocqueville, Miss Martineau, Herbert Spencer, and all to whom motive is of greater significance than its expression, American life, until the worship of wealth took from it much of its distinctiveness, was characterized by a hesitancy to accept favor at another's hands, which was unique in its assumption of indifference, and sometimes almost churlish in its expression of acknowledgment, as if it somehow feared that gratitude might be construed as an indication of servility. It did not produce an altogether pleasing effect on the unaccustomed observer, but it was the index of a manhood too proud to ask for favor, which laid the obligation of request upon the donor rather than the recipient. It was indicative, too, of an inherent hospitality, which offered without reluctance, gave without expecting thanks, and apologized only for causing discomfort or inconvenience to others. Who that remembers the

road before the railway robbed the turnpike of the character of a highway and made the foot passenger *prima facie* an object of suspicion, does not recall the almost universal rule which required the driver of a vehicle not too heavily loaded to offer the pedestrian a "lift;" and who ever knew this offer to be accepted, even by the weariest wayfarer, without apology? For a like reason we were not profuse in the acknowledgment of favors. The Frenchman's easy effusiveness is as foreign to the American character as the careless yet apologetic "Thanks, awfully, you know," of the middle-class Englishman, or the surly silence of the peasant. The American "I'm much obliged," no matter with what lack of grace pronounced, nor how much the final syllable was flatted and prolonged, was the very essence of self-respecting gratitude. It never came easily, and was never uttered with flippancy. It was the serious acknowledgment compelled by an actual sense of duty, of a favor which the recipient felt somehow that he ought hardly to have taxed the giver's kindness to bestow. There was nothing grudging or surly about it, as so many have seemed to think, but only the modest shame-facedness of a people who thought

the acceptance of a favor hardly consistent with that wonderful self-reliance which is the main-spring of American life, and to which was due that individualism of character and rage of self-achievement which made our first century of national life so fecund in marvellous results.

Dewstowe was not at all surprised, therefore, at this hesitant acknowledgment of his kindly proffer. Despite the fact that Ozro had been until that morning merely a "bound boy," and was still the hostler of the Inn, while Dewstowe was already a man of substance, and evidently predestined to achieve distinction in that barony of wealth to which our American millionnaires belong, there was no social inequality between them. The possibilities of all lives were then so nearly equal, that the wealthiest hardly stood above the lowliest in popular regard. The golden scales in which merit of all kinds is now weighed were not yet adjusted to show the delicate gradations that mark the life of to-day. Men met upon the level of manhood, and it was hardly considered presumptuous for the poorest and humblest to aspire to a marital alliance with even the wealthiest nabob in the land.

"Well," responded the pedler, jocularly, "had n't you rather ride than walk?"

"Yes, of course," assented Ozro with a smile ;
"but it will take me a little while to get ready."

"All right," said Dewstowe, climbing to his seat, "I'm in no hurry. Throw me that off rein, if you please. All right," he continued, catching it skilfully as it came uncoiling swiftly from the other's hand. "Just shift those inside checks, won't you? The near one should be on top."

While Ozro was attending to this, the merchant amused himself by showing his mastery over the dog, which had already mounted to its usual place and was surveying the preparations for departure with evident approval. He acknowledged his master's presence by running his great red tongue rapidly out and in between the fore-shortened upper jaw and the formidable row of ivory that encircled it below, and weaving back and forth on the seat in an apparently vain attempt to wag his much abbreviated tail.

"Here, Turk, you brute ! get back there and make room for your betters." Dewstowe snapped his fingers as he spoke, and pointed to the railed top of the wagon-box behind. The dog merely glanced in the direction indicated and turned his face again to the front, evidently preferring his location on the cushion.

“What! you won’t? Well, we’ll see. Back, I say!”

The dog did not move. The master took the cigar from his mouth, knocked the ashes off the end, and held it toward the dog, pointing backward at the same time with his whip. The animal drew away from the live coal in evident trepidation, and began picking his way rather daintily over the lowered top to the place indicated, where he seated himself with an unmistakable look of offended dignity.

“That fetches him every time,” said the owner, with a laugh. “He gets wicked sometimes. Tried it once at a blacksmith’s shop, and I let him bite a piece of hot iron. Has n’t had any appetite for fire since. It was a cold day, you see, and he climbed the forge and kind of took possession on his own account. After a while he got a notion that the smith worked the bellows just to blow sparks at him, and so went for the man’s arm. Of course I interfered, and then he turned on me. I grabbed a nail-rod, most white-hot, out of the fire and stuck it in his face. He did n’t flinch a hair, but just eyed it a second, his eyes looking almost as wicked as the iron, and then he bounced it with a roar. He did n’t hang on long, though, and has never

shown me the whites of his eyes since. I always have my own way, you see, and never make any fuss about it either. Are you ready?"

"I will be in a moment," responded Ozro. Running toward the house, he soon reappeared carrying a small package, which he placed carefully inside the curved dashboard before taking his place beside the merchant-prince of the road.

"You handle that as if there were eggs in it," laughed the other, flecking the whip toward the box.

"Well," said Ozro, as he rolled down his sleeves and drew on his coat, "I hope there are."

He took his seat. Dewstowe cracked his whip, the dog gave an impatient whine, the four horses sprang into their collars at the same instant, and Dotty, standing on the porch, waved a good-by to her curiously-contrasted lovers as they dashed off toward the village.

"Nice girl!" said the knight of the road, when he had drawn in his horses after the flourish with which he left the Inn; "nice girl!"

"Yes," said Ozro, seeing that he was expected to say something.

"Queer, though," continued the driver;

"deuced queer ! All of 'em queer !" pointing with his whip over his shoulder toward the Inn. "Old man and his wife both crazy, I guess ; but the girl, — she's just as bright as they make 'em. She's *A-1*, all wool, doubled-and-twisted, superfine, and a yard wide ! No doubt about that ; but she's queer, — blamed if she ain't ! What do you suppose she told me last night ?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Ozro, somewhat cautiously.

"It was while you were in there with the old woman. By the way, was n't that a devil of a row ? What was it all about ? You don't know ? Well, nor I either. I vow, those screeches fairly made my hair stand up ! I never heard such unearthly sounds before. I would have gone in with Miss Dotty, but she sent me back in a way that showed she was in command of that schooner, and would n't stand no nonsense. Bosses everything, don't she ? I thought so. Well, she's smart, and no mistake. Old man-Lonny, he was regularly upset ; began pottering around, muttering about the ghost and piling on the wood as if he expected to roast the evil spirit out. Queer, is n't it, his idea of the Devil being afraid of fire, like Turk here ? As if it was n't

the very thing he is most used to. Who was it did the war-whoops, anyhow? Not the old woman, I s'pose?"

Ozro shook his head.

"Thought not. She has n't spoken above a whisper in years, they tell me. Not so bad a thing for a pair that don't get along any better than they do. The old man does n't seem to appreciate the blessing, though. He even complains about it, and lays that to the account of the ghost, too. Told me all about it last night. He saw it once, — that is, the ghost, — or thinks he did; and shot at it with a silver bullet, — and all that sort of old-time notions. He says his wife has n't been the same sort of woman since that time. Last night's the first time he's heard it do the real whooping business since; and in all that time he says she has n't been able to speak aloud. Queer! I never could make her out, for she never wasted much breath on me, even in whispers. Lonny says she's very fond of you. Well, that's right. I'm sure she ought to be. Anybody can see they'd have gone to the dogs long ago without you, — before Dotty grew up, that is. The old man don't seem to lavish any great amount of affection in that way, though. I expect Miss Dotty

sides with her mother, eh? You don't know? Well, a man is n't called on to tell the truth unless he chooses. For me, now, I always tell it, — always."

He chirruped gleefully to his horses, chuckled to himself, and touched up the off-leader in complacent applause of his own jest.

"Oh, I did n't tell you what Dotty said to me," the pedler continued, "did I? Got off the subject, you see. Well, she told me a good deal; among other things, that you were twenty-one to-day, and going off to seek your fortune."

The young man blushed violently as his voluble companion paused for a reply, and answered somewhat confusedly, —

"Well, not to-day. I stay till Christmas."

"Yes; she told me that, too. Well, that's good of you. Hard for 'em to get along without you, I s'pect, even with Dotty's help. Rough on her, too, to run the concern alone. What are you going to do? Don't know? Well, the world's wide. You'll find something, I don't doubt. Any fancy for trade? Thought not. You might acquire a taste for it — perhaps! You're smart enough, and not bad looking if — if you had something to wear."

He glanced at his companion, to whom this

remark made the homespun he wore almost as uncomfortable as the shirt of Nessus.

"How would you like to go on the road now, and drive a span like those leaders? Ain't a bad thing, is it? If you had a little experience — now, see here, Mr. Evans," — it was almost the first time that Ozro had ever been given that title, and he started at being thus addressed, — "I'm going out of this business pretty soon : can't afford to stay in it ; got a better thing on hand, you know. Now, why not work for me a year or two, and take the business, or a part of it, when I drop it? It would take you a while to get broken in, of course ; but it's a chance that don't come to a man every day. What do you say?"

Ozro thanked him, but said he had no taste for such a life, and no desire to engage in it.

"That's all right," said the merchant, gayly ; "then, of course, you'd better not try to work that lay. I just thought I might do you a good turn and not do myself any harm, you know. The fact is, Miss Dotty seems so interested in you I could n't help showing my good-will. So you'll stay right on?"

"Till the year ends, — yes."

"And after that?"

"I don't know."

"West?"

"Perhaps."

"See here, Evans, we may as well be square with each other. You know I think a good deal of Dotty, and I expect you have the same symptoms.

His companion said nothing.

"Well, silence gives consent. Now, what do you suppose she told me last night? Could n't guess? I believe you. Nobody'd ever guess. Well, sir, she told *me* — J. Dewstowe, of New York — that she could n't marry me. Mind you, she did n't say she *would n't*, but she *could n't*. And what reason do you suppose she gave?"

Ozro's heart beat so wildly he thought he was going to fall from his perch, and clasped the arm of the seat to hold himself in position.

"I don't suppose you could guess that, either? Well, sir, she told me she would have to marry you and stay and take care of the old folks; keep up the old Inn and look after the ghost, I suppose — there won't be anything else to look after pretty soon. Travel and trade's all going another way. If it was n't for my influence on the road I guess they would n't get much now."

"That's what Dotty says," replied Ozro, simply.

"Does, eh? Well, she's right, ain't she? She's smart, she is. I tell you what, it's a shame to think of that girl staying there slaving for those two old mummies, and trying to make a living out of nothing! You think so, too? Of course you do. Any decent man would. And yet you're the very cause of her doing it. How? Why, she feels under obligation to you on her parents' account, don't you see? It seems you have n't been treated just right, and she feels bound to make it up to you, you know. Very natural, — very creditable, too, I am sure, to *her*. But what about the man that allows her to do it? You have n't *asked* her to do it for your sake? Of course not; but you know that's what she's going to do it for, all the same.

"Now, look here, Ozro," he continued, "that girl ought to marry a man with money. You think so, too? The dickens you do! and yet you propose to marry her yourself? You have n't said so? Of course not. You don't need to say it. Anybody can see what will be the upshot, the way things are going on in that old Inn these days. I don't doubt you love her; but

you don't realize what you're doing when you ask her to marry you. I s'pose, of course, you'll make a living of some sort. It's hard for a man to fail of that in this country, if he's willing to work. But before you could get ahead any she'd be worn out taking care of the old folks and trying to keep up her end. She'd do that, you know, if she killed herself at it. Love is a good thing, no doubt, and a handy thing in a family ; but one can't live on it any more'n a mouse can live on religion, which is the reason there is n't any such a thing as a church-mouse, in spite of all we hear about it. I think sometimes, though, there is n't much difference between what we call love and selfishness. If you really loved her now — ”

“ I love her so well I'd be willing to die for her,” said Ozro, hotly.

“ No doubt, no doubt,” said the imperturbable merchant ; “ but you see it don't happen to be exactly that sort of goods she's in need of just now. Your dying would n't do her a cent's worth of good. In fact, it would be about the only thing that could make matters any worse for her if you should really marry. As for me, now,” he continued, in the same even tone, “ I don't pretend to very much sentiment. I sup-

pose I'd stand between her and danger — if I had to. 'Most any man would. In that way I might possibly die for her. But I don't hanker after any such job; and as for going out and just offering myself up, dry so, just to increase her stock of happiness, why, blame me, I don't mind saying I would n't do it. That's all there is of it — I would n't."

"I *would*," said Ozro, fervently.

Dewstowe looked his companion steadily in the eye, shifting his cigar from one side of his mouth to the other by a peculiar motion of his lips as he did so.

"Well," said he, after he had concluded his inspection, "I ain't sure but you would. You're one of that sort. Your mother killed herself, did n't she?"

"I don't know!" said Ozro, pale to his lips with anger.

"I don't mean no offence, Mr. Evans," said the other in a softened tone. "I was just thinking that probably it was love that drove her to it. Them's the kind that do most usually die for love. 'Tain't no reflection on them, that they love more desperately than others, — perhaps they are all the better for it; but as the man we'd both like to have for a

father-in-law says, 'Tain't nateral — 'tain't nateral.'"

He mimicked the old man with such ready accuracy that Ozro could not help laughing, though he was bursting with rage at the man's coolness.

"No," continued the other, "it is n't natural, and it is n't pleasant, either. You're one of that sort, I do believe. I like you for it, and I'm sorry for you, too. I could n't do it any more'n you could do what I would. I could live for her, now; take care of her; give her comfort, ease, luxury, and only ask a chance to work for her. I can make her happy, you see, while you —"

"See here, Mr. Dewstowe!" said the young man, turning on him with flaming eyes, "don't let's talk of this any more. If I cannot make Dotty Button happy,—if she would not rather face life with me than with you or any one else on earth,—I don't want her to marry me, and she shall not, either. The only thing any man has a right to think of is the happiness of the woman he loves, and his love is not worth the name if it takes any account of his own comfort or enjoyment in comparison with hers."

"Now you're talking by the yardstick," said

the merchant, with approving emphasis. "If you only had nerve to practise what you preach!"

"Practise what I preach? Why, Mr. Dewstowe, if I thought she'd be happier with you I'd get out of your way to-morrow."

"Would you, though?" said the other, keenly. "That's business, now. I'd make it worth your while too, — I would, I vow."

Ozro looked at him in amazement. Then the oddity of the proposal struck him, and he said with a quiet laugh, —

"I said 'if,' Mr. Dewstowe, — 'if' I thought she would be happier."

"Of course you did," was the cool reply; "but it was n't necessary. Anybody that's got half a grain of common-sense can see that she would be. That follows, don't you see?"

This was too much for Ozro's equanimity, and he roared with laughter.

"That is for her to decide, is n't it?" he asked when he could control himself.

"Yes, of course," said the other, complacently, "unless we should decide it for her."

"No, no! we can't do that. Let her determine what will give her most happiness, and let us abide by her decision."

"Well, that's fair," said the merchant, "we'll

put the question to her squarely, and take the consequences. Give us your hand."

They shook hands good-naturedly. Dewstowe threw away his cigar, and started his horses into a brisk trot.

"I tell you what, Evans, you are a sensible fellow. I regard the matter as good as settled. Of course, she can't decide but one way on those terms. That's sense, you see — leaves out sentiment, and comes down to the clear hard-pan of every-day life. She just has to say which can make her happiest. I vow, Evans, I think you have made a bad bargain. I believe she likes you better than she does me, but when it comes to talking of happiness, and she looks forward to working all her life and having nothing when it is over—by George, man! when it comes to that, she's bound to decide for me. But I won't forget you, old fellow, I won't for a fact," he continued, slapping the other's knee; "you shall have a start in anything you want to go into."

"I shall not want your money, sir, if that is her decision," said Ozro, angrily.

- "Oh, see here, don't get into a huff over it," said the imperturbable tradesman. "Fair's fair, and that's all either of us want. Come now, when shall the matter be decided? To-night?"

"On Christmas day."

"So far ahead? But you won't take any advantage, — get her to make any promises, I mean, before that time?"

"Not a word."

"All right; Christmas it is, then. I'll go down along the Conewango, around by Warren and Meadville, and back by Erie in time to eat my Christmas dinner at Button's. I'm sure to beat you — it's my luck, you see. Besides that, I have the advantage. But don't you be down-hearted, old fellow, and don't do anything rash. I should n't if I knew I was going to lose, and I do hate to think you would. If you were as well fixed as I am, I tell you frankly I would n't waste my time trying to compete with you. But that's part of my luck. Yours may comè later. Ten years of sharp work makes a good deal of difference. I wish you all sorts of good fortune up to Christmas, and afterward too, but on that day the worst that can be imagined."

The good-natured salesman laughed heartily, threw his foot upon the brake, and touched up the leaders as he came down the little hill that rises above the county-seat to the northward, and saw the little inland lake smiling bright beneath the autumn sun before them.

"I s'pose you'll be ready to go back before I have finished with my customers. I may go round by Tinkertown, and perhaps climb over the hills and come up by the lake road; but you may look out for me at the Inn to-night, sooner or later. Tell Dotty not to cry her pretty eyes out if I should be late. Good-by."

The self-confident tradesman hitched his horses in front of the principal store in the village, entered it past a group of gaping rustics, helped himself from a jug of Jamaica rum that stood on the counter near the door, with a tumbler and a measure of molasses beside a pitcher of water, mixed a glass of "blackstrap," tossed it off, and at once entered into negotiations with the proprietor for a supply of those things which a glance at the shelves told his practised eye the establishment most required.

Ozro sauntered along the streets, his precious parcel under his arm, until he came opposite a lawyer's office, which he entered hesitantly. It was past noon when he started on his way homeward, but he arrived there long before the pedler, and found Dotty waiting for the tale of news she evidently expected him to bring. To all her inquiries he responded only with glow-

ing descriptions of the pedler's possessions and achievements.

"Oh, bother Mr. Dewstowe!" said the sprightly maiden, with a pretty grimace. "What I want to know is what you had in that box you were so careful of, why I never saw it before, and what you have done with it?"

"That's just what Mr. Dewstowe wanted to find out, too. He kept hitting it with his foot, every now and then, all the way to town."

"There it is again, — Dewstowe! Dewstowe! One would think you were a parrot. If you don't stop saying 'Dewstowe! Dewstowe!' to me, I'll up and marry him in self-defence and to punish you — there!"

She flung a defiant look at him as she left the porch to enter her mother's room.

"Dear me!" said the young man, in mock perplexity, "that's just what Dewstowe said."

She was beside him in an instant.

"Did he say that, Ozro? Did he brag to you that I had promised to marry him?"

There was an anxious, tender look in her eyes that made his heart leap; but he had promised that he would not induce her to commit herself. Besides that, his hopes were as yet only hopes. Perhaps he would never dare to ask her to share

his fortune with him. So he dropped his bantering tone, and said seriously, —

“No, Dotty; he spoke only respectfully and kindly of you.”

She turned away with a sigh that had a hint of disappointment in it.

A MODERN EPHEBUS.

IT was a jolly company that gathered at Button's that night. The story of the ghost's re-appearance after so many years had spread throughout the neighborhood, and many, especially of the younger people, had come to see if it would walk again; while not a few of their elders had determined to renew their memories of the past by a Saturday evening at the old Inn. The knights of the road had gathered in unusual force, and of every conceivable type,—from the bearer of a modest pack of Irish linen, whose unmistakable brogue was a sufficient guarantee of the genuineness of his stock, to a vender of clocks from Connecticut, whose turnout was only less magnificent than that of Dewstowe himself. Among them was a spectacled German, who wore a beard, carried a pack of essences and perfumery, and talked with strange familiarity, though in broken English, of things beyond the range of his companions. There too was

the inveterate tin-pedler, whose lean horse had dragged his heterogeneous load up the hill to the barn-door just as the sun went down. His wagon was heaped with bags of all sorts and sizes, from the rents of which protruded rags of all grades and colors. Wash-basins, dippers, skillets, and various other articles of domestic use hung rattling and clattering against the side of the vehicle. The cart itself was covered with so many and such ancient layers of mud that its color was barely discoverable, and the driver, a weazen-faced Yankee, was a fit companion for his skeleton horse and dilapidated wagon. Some half-a-dozen young men with packs containing a little extra clothing, with perhaps a book or two and an axe, — young men from away down East going West to seek their fortunes, — had stopped to pass the Sabbath at Button's, influenced not so much by the character of the hostel or its surroundings as by the fact that its charges were less than at the crowded taverns on the shore road. Most of them carried their shoes, tied together by the strings, across the sticks which supported their packs. These washed their feet at the watering trough and stood about on the straw of the barn-floor while they

were drying, before putting on their shoes and stockings and approaching the house. Most of them washed their hands and faces at the trough too, wiping them upon a great towel which hung inside the feed-room door, and dressed their hair with curious wooden combs sawed out of boxwood, which matched together in pairs, the teeth of one fitting into a tapering slot running along the back of the other. Each carried a pair of these combs in his vest pocket. This was the only toilet article of universal use at that time. Ozro's mother had used a hair-brush during her stay at the Inn, and the fact was still recited as proof of her aristocratic proclivities. An ivory-handled tooth-brush was also found among her effects. These were still displayed as curiosities. Mr. Dewstowe was known to be the owner of a hair-brush, and was suspected of using a tooth-brush. But this was a mere suspicion. He rather enjoyed being suspected of sybaritic indulgence, but it would have injured his trade to have had it known that his teeth owed any of their whiteness to powdered charcoal and bristles.

A wash-bowl, with a wooden dish full of brown soft soap, stood on the back porch of the Inn, beside a great rain-trough that stretched

along under the eaves, while against the wall a lavish supply of fresh towels hung over a long roller; also a mirror fully a foot square framed with mahogany veneer. Beside this hung, by a stout string, a horn comb, which showed unmistakable signs of age in the failure of many of its teeth and the clogged condition of those that remained. That the young wayfarers did not choose to take advantage of these luxuries, which were free to all the patrons of the Inn, was no doubt due to the instinctive desire of the class to which they belonged to make as good an impression as possible upon their fellows. They were poor, and in a sense were not ashamed of their poverty; but they wished it to be distinctly understood that they had been "well-raised," as the expression was for those who were acquainted with the ways of good society, and expected to be well received because they showed themselves self-respecting. One of them hesitantly entered into conversation with Ozro, and arranged to pay for his entertainment by assisting in taking care of the dozen or more horses which unexpectedly demanded attention. Immediately upon the consummation of the bargain the stranger took off his coat, rolled

up his sleeves, and entered heartily upon his task. He was to sleep upon the hay in the mow, as were most of his companions, the Inn being for the first time in years over-full. Two of them, more scrupulous than the rest, occupied the last moments of daylight in shaving upon the back porch, in order that they might not be tempted to profane the Sabbath by such unnecessary labor.

Among others who came that night was a sallow, thin-faced man with a long dark beard, and, what was very rare in that day, a mustache. He wore a wide-brimmed felt hat, his hair hung upon his shoulders, and he coughed frequently. His hands were thin, and his eyes burned brightly under his dark, knotted brows. He got out of the stage, saying he was too tired to go any farther. He had been West for years, he told the landlord,—"down the river" most of the time, an expression indicating the Lower Mississippi. He had money enough, and proposed to stay at the Inn till he got well. He wanted the room next to the public, with the window opening on the porch, but the landlady refused to give it up even to accommodate so desirable a guest.

The night was cool, though so early in the

season. The wind blew off the lake, carrying inland a heavy bank of gray clouds. The neighbors talked of frost as they walked up the path to the Inn. A great fire was blazing on the hearth, the flames roaring up the black chimney's throat, when the company assembled in the public-room after supper. The door was open, and it was not uncomfortable, though the company sat around the sides of the room, and some of them smoked their pipes upon the porch, or gathered about the open door. Very few of the young men smoked. Most of the elders had their pipes. Dewstowe and the stranger from the South smoked cigars, — the latter, long slender ones of dark heavy tobacco, which reached out almost to the edge of the sombrero which he kept always upon his head "to avoid taking cold," he said. He sat in the corner of the fireplace, too, presumably for the same reason.

Dewstowe was the life of the company. He had engaged the landlord to brew an ample bowl of punch after a recipe he was said to have inherited from L'Honnête Boutonne the first, and he from some still more remote ancestor, who had learned the secret where the wines of France met the warmer decoctions of

tropic lands in the cellars of Bourdeaux. The bowl stood steaming on the table by the door, and the travelling merchant-prince invited the whole company to partake. The landlord sat beside it in his great armchair, filling the glasses from a curious wooden ladle, whose carvings unmistakably betrayed the handicraft of the Indian. This too was an heirloom, and the landlord told its story as he served his guests. There was a little rim of silver about its top. The wood was dark and had singular grainings, which led the sceptical to doubt the story of its having been hollowed by fire and smoothed by the same means that the aborigines used to bore holes in the heads of their stone hatchets. The landlord was in radiant humor at the number and liberality of his company that night, for not a few jorums of black-strap had been mixed before the punch was ordered. During a pause in its use, the bearded stranger took the ladle from the bowl and carefully examined it by the firelight. There was a smile on his face as he returned it to its place.

"Satisfied, stranger?" asked the landlord, petulantly.

"Quite," was the reply, in a voice but little above a whisper.

"What do you think of it?"

"Mexikin," answered the stranger.

"Then how came it here?" asked the landlord, arrogantly.

"Suppose you tell?" was the stranger's smiling response.

"Me? Did n't I jest tell ye it was giv to my grandfayther by a Onondagus Injun?"

"Might be," said the other, quietly.

"Might be? I tell you it *was*!" was the landlord's angry reply. "I had it from my fayther, and he got it from his, and I guess they knew."

"The redskin must have been quite a traveller then; for I'll swear that neither the material nor the workmanship was ever found this side of the Rier Grandy. Ef that ain't Navayoe work, and the cup the shell of a nut that don't grow north of the Red River, then I'll eat it, pewter 'n' all," said the stranger.

"Don't quarrel about the cup and leave the company to die of thirst," said Dewstowe, mindful of the old man's irascible nature. "If there's any question about the dipper, refer it to Carey," with a gesture toward the tin-pedler; "only don't let him touch it till the company are through drinking."

A laugh followed this sally, for the personal

habits of the tinman were recognizable upon the most cursory inspection.

"By the way, Carey, how often do you wash your hands, or feed your horse?"

"About twice as often as you tell the truth about yer goods," drawled the tinman, with the utmost nonchalance.

"Oh, come, now," said Dewstowe, when the laugh had died away, "that may do as to your hands. I don't blame a man in your business for being afraid to use a public washbowl, — danger of spreading small-pox and other diseases, you know, — but the horse tells his own story. I saw the crows gathering around when you stopped in front of the barn to-night."

"'T won't do 'em any good," said Carey; "he's had the glanders these ten years."

"Glanders!" exclaimed Dewstowe, jumping from his chair excitedly, "what right have you to drive a glandered horse on a public road?"

Dewstowe had laid his hand on the tinman's shoulder, who also rose and stood facing him. The dog belonging to the former, which had been sitting before the fire rolling his red eyes this way and that upon the company, seeing his master's attitude, advanced upon the tinman, his eyes flashing, his white teeth gleaming in his red

muzzle, bristling and growling, evidently ready to spring upon his master's antagonist.

"What right have you to drive a glandered crow-bait?" repeated Dewstowe, half in earnest, for he began to see that the laugh was against him, and wondered how he should get out of the dilemma.

"What right?" asked the tinman, coolly; "the same right you have to carry about a mangy dog."

The roar that greeted this retort carried the victor too far. He aimed a kick at the dog, thinking to add to his rival's discomfiture. Of course it missed its mark. There was an angry roar, and the next minute Dewstowe was on the floor tugging away at the dog's collar, and shouting to Carey to get out of the room.

There was a quick scattering of the guests, and when the merchant had subdued his canine attendant he had restored himself again to the post of honor in the esteem of the little company. His action had been timely and considerate. It was one of those things a man feels glad to have done. Glancing toward the door Dewstone was not sorry to see Dotty, with one hand upon the frame of the door opening off the porch toward the dining-room, and the other

holding the corner of her white apron to her lips. It had required both strength and courage to subdue the savage brute, and he felt that he must have risen in the esteem of the landlord's daughter by the struggle she had witnessed.

The promptness of his action restored the *entente cordiale* in the company which his rough jests had somewhat disturbed. The tinman returned, shook hands with him, and, not to be outdone in courtesy, ordered the punch-bowl to be replenished at his own expense.

While the landlord carried the bowl to the kitchen, calling for Dotty as he did so to aid him in his onerous duty, the talk turned upon the dog and his kind. Some remarkable stories were told, Dewstowe taking care to keep the merits of his own really valuable animal prominently before the little group. He told of his various exploits, exhibited his teeth, and invited the spectators to pass their hands over the great flat head to assure themselves that no antagonist had ever "chawed his scalp." Some allusion having been made to his qualities as a watch-dog, his master took out a pocket-book, and laying it on the floor beside the dog, said:—

"Care for it, Turk!"

Then turning to the company, he added carelessly, —

“ I don’t know just exactly how much there is in that pocket-book, but if any of you want to pick it up without using any more of a weapon than an ordinary walking-stick, he’ll be entirely welcome to what there is.”

“ No, I thank you,” said Carey ; “ I would n’t try it if you’d put up your team and stock with it, and Heaven knows I’d be glad to get either by any honester way than stealing.”

“ Especially the team,” said Dewstowe.

“ Well, yes,” said the other, dryly ; “ and I don’t mind saying I believe I’d take the risk of being caught stealing them wheelers if I had a good chance, but not while that dog’s in the same county with ’em. Just tell him to look the other way, won’t you, Dewstowe ? It gives me a kind of crawly feeling in the calves of my legs to see him looking this way and sharpening his upper teeth on the under ones in that damnable manner, as if they were just aching for a piece of fresh meat to hold ’em apart. There, that’s better now.”

This last remark was the result of the dog’s attention being diverted by the entrance of Ozro, bearing the steaming punch-bowl, and followed

by the landlord, whose steps had grown too unsteady to permit him to perform this duty, though his tongue wagged readily enough in unneeded caution to the young man.

Setting the bowl upon the table Ozro looked around upon the company while the glasses were being refilled, snapping his thumb and finger at the dog, which sat in the middle of the room, guarding the treasure intrusted to his care.

"Perhaps you would like to pick up that little keepsake between his feet, Mr. Evans," said Dewstowe in a sarcastic tone.

"Oh, I don't want your money," answered Ozro, pleasantly.

"Don't *want* it? Ain't we high and mighty? One would think you had the United States Bank behind you. You ain't related to old Nick Biddle in any way, are you? Really, you must be uncommon flush. When a gentleman lays down his pocket-book and invites you to help yourself, you just say, 'No, I thank you; haven't any need for filthy lucre!' That's your position, I believe."

The king of the mercantile nomads blew the smoke from his cigar, and glanced complacently in the direction of the door, beyond which he caught sight of Dotty watching interestedly

what was going on in the room. The sarcasm was appreciated by his auditors, and rewarded by a laugh, in which Ozro joined heartily.

"Not exactly that, Mr. Dewstowe," he answered. "I'd like the money well enough, but don't care about getting it in that way."

"Oh, it's the way you object to," said the smiling and triumphant pedler. "Why, what's the matter with the way? It can't be the dog in the way, can it?"

"Oh, no, Turk and I are very good friends," said Ozro, snapping his fingers again at the dog, who responded to his overtures by wagging his stump of a tail and moving his tongue quickly back and forth.

"Friends!" said Dewstowe, "don't rely on that dog's friendship when he's got business on hand. Why, he's just licking his chops for a taste of his 'friend' now."

The laugh went round, and many bantering remarks were made to the young man, who stood with his back to the fire, answering with only a careless smile.

"You don't think he would bite *me*?" he asked.

"Bite you! Why, he'd chaw you up in a minute if you just pointed a finger at him."

"You would n't say anything, nor make any sign to him, I s'pose?"

"Say anything? There 'd be no need to."

"I don't want your pocket-book, but if you'll give him a handkerchief instead, I believe I'll try to get it."

"Oh, go ahead. You're welcome to all you get out of that 'weasel-skin' without killing the dog. I expect there is nearly a thousand dollars in it, but I'll risk it."

"Don't ye dew it, Mr. Dewstowe, don't ye dew it!" said the landlord. "Don't ye know that air creetur ain't no more afraid of a dog than of a chicken? Don't you resk nothin' on it, Dewstowe. Ther ain't no dog'll bite him more 'n 't would a rattlesnake. 'T ain't nateral the way the creeturs'll let him impose on 'em,—jest like one of them lion-tamers, only he did n't have tew larn it. Ther's somethin' mysterious about it, as ther' is 'bout everythin' connected with him, and always has been. I've always believed," he continued, dropping his voice and looking quickly around,—"I've always believed it was bein' kin to a ghost!"

"Pshaw! there is n't any ghost about Ozro," said Dewstowe, glad of an opportunity to express his incredulity. "On the contrary, he's

about as solid a piece of meat as there is in the room."

His words were verified by many an approving glance at the young man, who stood before them the very picture of health and strength. A little above the medium height, his well-knit figure showed suppleness and strength. His neck was somewhat too long for perfect grace, but his head was set squarely upon it, and the close-clipped hair that curled about it deepened the impression of slenderness. His forehead was high and the face somewhat narrow, though the jaw was strong and the brows heavy. The eyes were deep-set, and of a sharp steely gray. Altogether, head and face left an impression of redness without being positively florid, and expressed character and determination without ill-nature. He looked at the landlord during the delivery of his tirade with a twinkle in his eyes, and without interruption or apparent discomposure, until allusion was made to the ghost. Then his look changed to one of annoyance rather than displeasure, and he remarked in a tone of quiet remonstrance, —

"You ought not to say that, Mr. Button! The time has been when such a story might cost a man his life. You know there is nothing in it!"

"Do you deny it? Do you deny it?" cried the old man, springing to his feet and brandishing the ladle furiously about his head. "Have n't I seen you over and over again go right up to dogs you never saw before and take away the very bones they were gnawing? Have n't I seen you walk right on to a rabbit settin' in her form, and pick her up as easy as if it was a stone? And don't every one about the neighborhood know that a wild turkey 'll jest set an' look at you as ef he was 'charmed, an' let you walk up within easy gunshot right out in the open?"

"That's so," said one of the neighboring young men, who felt a little jealous of Ozro's skill as a hunter.

"Pshaw, that's nothing!" said Ozro, with a laugh. "A turkey is n't a fool. If he sees you are going right by and paying no attention to him, he'll sit still. He thinks you don't see him, and that he has no need to fly; that is, if he is in a tree. On the ground they're always shyer. If you keep dodging, and trying to hide, he is naturally suspicious. If you walk as if you were going by, and do not keep looking at him, all you have to do when you get near enough is to stop and shoot before he gets over his sur-

prise. All kinds of game are afraid of a man who acts suspiciously."

"There is 'nt any doubt about that," wheezed the stranger with philosophic approval.

"How about pickin' up rabbits as if they wuz chestnut-burrs?"

"Oh, that was mere accident!" said Ozro, pleasantly. "I never did it but a few times."

"Two or three such accidents in a lifetime is a good many. I'll ventur ther' ain't any other man here's had sech a thing come his way once."

"Here's von ob 'em dat nebber did anyhow," said the German, who had been staring intently at the young man through his spectacles during the altercation with the landlord.

"Good for you, Dutchy!" said Dewstowe. "Here's another, too; more'n that, I don't expect it ever will. I've read of people having such a power over brutes, but never saw anything of it; and, to tell the truth, I don't believe a word of it, either. Let him try it on Turk if he dare!"

"Really," said the stranger, who sat in the corner of the fireplace, in a hollow whisper, "it's a very interesting thing! I should be glad to see you try it if you have any such power, and are not afraid."

"Why, sir," said Ozro, turning toward the last speaker, "there's nothing remarkable in it, and nothing really to be afraid of. I am fond of animals, and have studied their ways. That's all there is of it."

"Do you think you could take the pocket-book from him?"

"I have n't a doubt of it, sir."

"Have you any objection to making the attempt?"

"If it will afford the company any pleasure, and they will comply with one request, I'll try."

"What is that?"

"No one must stir hand or foot, nor speak. It might be dangerous if they did."

"I am sure the company will consent," wheezed the asthmatic stranger, yet with an air of command.

There was a clamorous assent. The landlord subsided into his chair, muttering to himself and sipping the punch, of which he had already drunk more than was advisable. Every one settled himself into a position where he could see without moving. Dotty looked in over the heads of those sitting about the doorway. She had thrown her white apron over her head, and held it about her neck with one hand.

"Will you lend me your snuff-box, sir?" asked Ozro of the German who held one in his hand.

The man handed it to him without answering. Ozro took it and dropped quickly upon one knee on the sanded floor in front of the dog, keeping the snuff-box in his left hand and tapping the cover rapidly with the nail of his right forefinger. He was not more than a yard from the dog, and kept his gaze intently fixed on the animal's eyes. The silence was breathless. Ozro leaned forward, still drumming on the box, and drew his knee slowly along the floor. The dog watched him, at first wonderingly, and then threateningly. Resting on the knee the young man now advanced his other foot, still moving his hands rapidly about the snuff-box, sometimes tapping the lid, and sometimes turning the cover back and forth, but never changing his position in front of the dog, and never taking his eyes off the animal's blood-shot orbs. So he crept, inch by inch, toward the savage brute. The dog growled, showed his teeth, opened his great jaws with an angry roar, rose upon his feet, and seemed about to launch himself at the throat of his strange assailant. Then his eyes wavered. He looked from one to another of the silent company. Dotty smiled, as she saw

signs of indecision in the brute's manner. Still Ozro continued to advance. He had taken the cover off the box, and was lightly and swiftly tapping the rim with it. The dog gave way a little, — turned first to one side and then to the other.

The young man's hands were almost against the animal's nose. His face was hardly a foot away from the red mouth and shining teeth. Not a muscle of his face moved as he breathed steadily and deeply. Without changing his position in the least, he advanced first his foot and then his knee by almost imperceptible degrees. Finally there comes a hint of pitifulness into the dog's growl. Then it becomes a snarling whine. He looks around to his master. Dew-stowe remains immovable; he does not even wink. The dog yields still farther, and draws himself crouchingly toward his master's feet. Ozro's knee touches the pocket-book; then it is lifted over it. The dog has abandoned his trust; the pocket-book is in Ozro's possession: it only remains for him to retire in safety, drawing the pocket-book along the floor with his knee. Slightly inclining to the left, he begins to retrace his course. Still his hands play ceaselessly with the snuff-box; still his eyes are

fastened on those of the crouching but glowering brute. Already he has retreated half the distance he had advanced. The dog creeps toward him, as if relieved from the power of his look. All at once the landlord became conscious of what Ozro had accomplished.

"Don't ye see, Dewstowe, he's robbin' ye! He's got yer money. Take him!" he shouted fiercely to the dog.

The charm was broken. The young man's power over the dog vanished instantly. There was a fierce roar, a white flash, and a pair of great gaping jaws hurled themselves at the young man's throat. The stranger fell upon the landlord. Dewstowe bounded after the dog. Every one sprang to his feet. There were shouts and oaths. Some turned their heads away sickened with apprehension. Dotty's face grew pale, even to the parted lips, but her eyes remained riveted on the scene that was transpiring on the floor. Despite her evident apprehension, there was a look on her face that bespoke confidence in the prowess of her old playmate. She did not see another pallid face that looked over her shoulder.

It was all over in a second. The young man did not shrink, nor seek in any manner to

avoid the attack. He might as well have tried to dodge a lightning flash. The snuff-box was tossed quickly upward, and a cloud of the pungent powder fell upon the white nose, entered the red mouth, and found its way into the glaring eyes. Then the left hand shot quickly between the gaping jaws, and, almost before the spectators knew what was happening, Ozro had leaped upon his feet holding the helpless brute by the tongue, which he had clutched at the very roots, and was kicking him with his heavy boot in the region of the heart. The brute's snarls soon changed to whining, and he struggled only to escape. The acrid dust had entered his lungs as well as eyes, and added to his discomfiture; so that when Ozro released his hold, the animal rolled about the floor in frantic endeavors to rid himself of the impalpable enemy that choked and blinded and stung him with remorseless malignity.

The landlady glided noiselessly into the room during the *mêlée*, and, shaking her finger at her husband who was struggling in the stranger's grasp, hissed in his ear the word, "Murderer!"

It sobered him at once. Some of the neighbors noticed the action, and heard the whisper. The stranger released his hold of the

landlord, and gazed in unconcealed horror at the pale-faced, gray-haired woman.

"There's your money, Dewstowe," said Ozro, tossing the merchant his pocket-book when the turmoil had subsided. The dog had rushed out of doors, and could be heard growling and whining as he rubbed his head in the dust of the roadway.

"Keep it," said Dewstowe. "I vow you've earned it. I would n't take the risk you did for all the money that ever was in it, and that's a good deal."

"Nor I either," said Ozro.

"You would n't? Then what the devil did you do it for?"

Ozro looked at him with a triumphant smile, and then glanced toward the door where Dotty stood.

"W-h-e-e-e-w!" whistled the pedler, with a shrug. "I've heard of such things."

"Are you hurt?" asked the stranger, anxiously.

"Nothing to speak of," answered Ozro, showing some slight abrasions.

Then followed wondering and congratulation. The German rescued his snuff-box minus its contents, and in a somewhat dilapidated con-

dition, but declared that he would not part with it at any price.

"Dot vas ferry prave, mein frendt; ferry prave und ferry — vat you call him? — ferry inghenyus, too; ferry inghenyus! It remind me of vat I hear in de village to-day, — apout a man, a ferry inghenyus man, somewhere apout here, dot haf invent von ferry curious machine vat put de leedle vire head on de bins, you know, shust faster nor a man can count, dey say. I tinks you must pe dot man, Mr. Ozro; I do, indeed. Nobody put a genius efer tink of fightin' a dog mit von leedle shnuff-pox."

He shook hands heartily with Ozro, who seemed all at once in haste to leave the room.

"It vas ferry inghenyus," the German repeated, as he lighted his pipe, "ferry inghenyus. Dot vas a goot idee pout buttin' de leedle vire heads on de bins, too, — goot idee. Somepody make some monish oud of shust dat leedle fool ting some days."

Ozro disappeared; Dotty and her mother left the porch; the neighbors dropped off to their homes; some of the guests sought their beds, and the remainder gathered about the fire and speculated as to the probability of the ghost paying the Inn a visit that night.

A "SENSIBLE AND TRUE AVOUCH."

ONLY Dewstowe, the stranger from the South, and the German remained at length wakeful occupants of the public-room. Long before the clock struck eleven the landlord had succumbed to the force of his own tipple, and sat snoring in his chair. The mechanism of the old Dutch clock which stood in the corner had hardly ceased to whirr and rattle after the performance of its stated duty, when a peculiar rushing, sighing noise, emphasized at regular intervals by a curious metallic sound, was heard in the room above. Dewstowe went out and looked up at the window of the haunted chamber. It was as dark as the night itself. Returning, he took a hammer from one of the shelves beside the chimney and carefully drew the nails at the top and bottom of the door leading to the stairway. Then he extracted the key from the landlord's pocket, and turned the bolt in the lock. Opening the door, the peculiar sounds in the room above were heard still more

distinctly. They certainly had a most ghostly suggestiveness. Taking the candle from the table at the landlord's elbow he said in a low tone, "Gentlemen, I mean to find out about this matter. The landlord's punch has served its purpose ; he is past making objection. Are you inclined to go with me, or shall I ask you to excuse the light while I am gone?"

"I don't fancy prowling around after such things, especially in other folks' houses ; besides I have n't very much breath to spare," said the asthmatic ; "but I reckon I can climb one pair of stairs if you insist on it. Shall I carry the candle?" His words did not imply any fondness for the adventure, but he was not a man to shrink from anything.

"No, thank you," said Dewstowe. "I'll lead the way."

"Vell, I goes along mit you, too," said the German, not removing the pipe from his mouth.

They took off their boots and went softly up the stairs in their stocking-feet. The mysterious sounds became more distinct as they advanced. Arrived at the landing, the German, who was in the rear, called attention to a thin line of light shining under the door. They held a whispered consultation, and it was de-

cided that the better way would be to have the stranger hold the candle while Dewstowe threw his whole weight against the door. This was done, and the excited merchant launched himself against the portal with a force that swung the unlatched door back against the wall and landed him half across the haunted chamber. The sight that presented itself to their eyes, was one well calculated to astonish searchers after the supernatural. At a rude table on which was burning a tallow candle stood Ozro Evans. His sleeves were rolled up above his elbows, and he held in his hand a file, which he had just been using. A machine, the wheels of which were still in motion, stood beside the table. The look he cast on the intruders was one of astonishment not unmixed with fright.

"Well, I swear!" exclaimed Dewstowe with a trace of anger, as soon as he had recovered from his surprise.

"Just about as I supposed," wheezed the stranger, as he advanced and set the candle he carried on the table.

"So zis is ze ghost?" queried the German, as he came forward and beamed benignantly on Ozro. "Zis is a goot ting to make von vork-shop of ze ghost's chamber!"

"That is it, exactly," said Ozro.

"So you are the ghost?" said Dewstowe.

"I am afraid I am the only one you will find here," said the young man, laughingly. "Are you disappointed?"

"I hardly know," said the other. "I had not expected this. I did not look for a ghost, but would have been less surprised to see one than to find you here."

"No doubt, and I am half-sorry for your disappointment," said Ozro. "If I had had an intimation that you were coming, I am not sure I should not have been tempted to treat you to a ghost of some sort."

"It is well enough you did n't," said the stranger, showing the butt of a pistol. "But how came you to practise such deceit? It would have served you right to have given you half an ounce of cold lead, just to teach you not to fool with people's superstitions."

His tones were absolutely fierce as he spoke, and he glanced around the room with something like a shudder.

"I had an idea I wanted to work out by myself," said Ozro, in reply; "and as this room was unoccupied, except by the ghost, I thought I should find it both convenient and retired."

"Vich it no doubt is!" said the German.

"Oh, yes," answered Ozro, "I have never been disturbed before."

"Then you have never seen the ghost?" asked the sick man, anxiously.

"Oh, the ghost and I are good friends," said Ozro, pleasantly.

"The ghost be damned!" said Dewstowe, spitefully.

"That you have been disappointed in the object you had in view, is no good reason why you should speak in that manner of what you know nothing about," remarked the stranger.

Dewstowe looked at him in surprise.

"You don't mean to say —" he began.

"I mean to say," interrupted the other, "that this boy's curious freak cannot account for what is said to have happened in this room when he was an infant."

"That's so," assented Dewstowe, meditatively. "I say, Evans," he continued, "you have n't had any unpleasant company in this old rookery, have you?"

"Oh, none at all," answered Ozro. "You see I have got so in the habit of working here that I suppose no well-bred ghost would ever think of molesting me."

“Vat ish it you pe doin’ here, any vay?” asked the German, who was narrowly inspecting the machine.

Ozro explained that something more than a year before he had heard a pedler describing the manufacture of pins, and showing how the chief difficulties attending it lay in the coiling of the fine wire of which the heads were then made about the larger wire of the pins, and sticking the finished work upon paper for sale, which was then done by hand. The pedler had given this in explanation of the cost of a paper of pins, and ventured the opinion that whoever should invent a machine to accomplish either of these results would achieve thereby a fortune. Ozro, already greatly impressed with the desperate state of affairs at the Inn, and inspired by his love for Dotty (of which, however, he said nothing), had at once set himself at work on these problems. Having a natural mechanical turn, he had soon devised a machine for accomplishing the desired end, and began the construction of a working model. For this purpose the haunted room had offered peculiar advantages; and having no confidence in the notion of supernatural occupancy, he had opened a passage from his own room in the rear upon

the landing, and had gone back and forth at will.

"Vell, dot vas a goot idee, too," said the German, admiringly. "So you vas de man I hear tell apout in de village, after all?"

"And you have never been suspected?" asked the stranger.

"I think not," said Ozro. "You see, I curtained the window closely with a blanket, and never lit a candle without first letting the curtain down."

"And during the whole time you have seen nothing of the ghost?" asked Dewstowe.

The young man shook his head, smilingly.

"That settles it," said Dewstowe. "I'll never believe in ghosts again."

"And I shall never doubt their existence," said the stranger.

"Der machine ish petter as te ghost," said the German, peering curiously at the rude model.

Then they gathered round, and Ozro explained the operation of each of his inventions, for there were two,—the one to form the head upon a pin, and the other to stick pins on papers.

"And they are both patented?" asked Dewstowe.

"Only the one that makes the heads," answered Ozro. "The application for the other has just been made."

"Ah," said Dewstowe, "that was the secret of your little box to-day?"

"Yes," answered Ozro, "that had the model in it."

"And how did you get the time and money for these things?" asked the stranger.

"Oh, it did n't cost much. I did the work at night and at odd times, and borrowed the money for the official fees. The lawyer at the village says he will wait for his pay till I get something out of the venture. He is very sanguine of the result."

"Dot he ish, and he haf goot reason to pe," said the German. "Only dink how much bins be used efery day! A half a cent on a tousand would be a fortune, and a pig one, too."

Dewstowe had been examining the machine very carefully.

"See here," he exclaimed, his commercial instinct getting the better of every other consideration, "I believe you *have* got a good thing, Evans — darned if I don't. What'll you take for a slice?"

"I don't know," said Ozro, dubiously.

"Of course you don't want to sell the whole of it, and I don't want to buy the whole. I should want you interested in it so as to be sure it did the best it possibly could. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give you a thousand dollars for a third interest in the two, cash down, and run my own risk. What do you say? That ain't so bad for the day you come twenty-one, eh?"

"I believe I'll take another third on the same terms, if you're willing," added the stranger, in his husky voice.

"Now, who says dot ghosts ish a pad tings to haf in a house, eh?" inquired the German. "I has n't got no moneys to invest, but I vish you luck — I does, inteed, Mr. Ozro."

"I seem to be having a good deal of that," said Ozro; "but I thank you all the same. Of course you understand what such an offer means to me, Mr. Dewstowe."

Ozro glanced significantly at his companion of the morning as he spoke.

"Oh, I understand all that," said the other, with an ingenuous flush upon his face, "but I'm afraid there is little chance for me. I saw how the wind blew when my cursed dog tried to make a meal of you to-night. I guess that

spoiled my trade. I don't blame her, either. You're born to good luck, and I believe you deserve it too. You see, gentlemen," he said, turning to the others, "this young man has the misfortune to be in love with the landlord's daughter, and the good fortune, I am afraid, to have his love reciprocated. I had a notion the same way,—have yet in fact; but I'm afraid it's no use. That's no reason I should have any spite against him, however, or fail to make money out of his brains."

"Dot ish peeze! dot ish *peeze*!" said the German, in hearty commendation.

"All I insist on, Mr. Evans," continued Dewstowe, "is that I have the pleasure of telling Miss Dotty of the good luck that has fallen in your way."

There were tears in Ozro's eyes as he extended his hand to the kindly-natured merchant.

"Did n't think I'd do such a thing, eh? Nor I, neither. In fact, I would have bet on my not doing anything to help you, hardly an hour ago. Even now, if I see there's still any sort of chance for me, you can count on my cutting in, every time. I'm afraid there's not much show, though I haven't exactly given up yet; but whether there is or not, what's the use of standing in

one's own light? There's a fortune in you, even if these things amount to nothing. I can see that. A man who will pick up such an idea here in this old tavern, and carry it out under such surroundings as you have had, has got a gold mine in his head, to say nothing of his hands."

"Exactly my opinion," wheezed the stranger.

So it was arranged that the papers should be drawn on Monday, and the partners in the new invention separated to dream of their respective profits.

It was past midnight. The candle was flickering in the socket. Ozro sat at the table wondering at his good fortune. His head rested on his hands, and his eyes were riveted on the rude model which was the secret of his happiness. So absorbed was he that he was oblivious of his surroundings until he was startled from his reverie by a sigh, and looking up he saw the ghost of the Inn standing before him. There was no mistaking the dim, shadowy figure with its flowing hair and white draperies, that seemed to gaze upon him with cold, unseeing eyes. For an instant his heart seemed to cease beating. He could only sit and stare at the mysterious figure

before him. After a moment it moved noiselessly to the front of the room, passed its hand along the walls, paused, repeated the motion, and then clasping its brow in apparent perplexity stole along the wall to the northeastern angle of the room, felt carefully up and down the notched logs, and turned away with a low sob of despair just as the candle flickered and went out. Before he could light another, the spectre had disappeared. Its mysterious departure surprised him quite as much as its advent. He took the candle and examined carefully every part of the room it had visited. The door had been closed after the visitors had left the room, and could not have been opened without attracting his attention. Besides, he remembered noticing that it was shut while the apparition was yet visible. He moved about the room very carefully, and after concluding his search sat down with his brows knitted and his eyes winking fast and hard in evident perplexity. He could no longer say he had never seen the ghost of Button's Inn.

“ASHES TO ASHES.”

IT was a busy period that intervened between the early autumn and a Christmas momentous, indeed, to the curiously contrasted denizens of Button's Inn. The "fall-work" was unusually heavy. The weather continued fine, and the crops of corn and potatoes were such as had not been seen on the place for many a year. The great mow was full of hay, the scaffolds and the lofts crowded with golden sheaves of oats and barley stored away for the winter's threshing. From the stalls, which were more numerous than the business of the Inn had of late demanded, the brown heads of buckwheat showed with their glittering red-and-white stalks; the unhusked corn was piled high on the great barn-floor, and the apples that lay upon the green hill-side were gathered into the cellar or ground to pomace in the creaking mill. Lonny Button seemed to have awakened out of the apathy which had so long affected him, and began once more to take a lively interest in all these

things. He wandered to the bursting barn, through the fields where the maize-stalks showed the white cleavage above the broad green pumpkin-leaves as Ozro "carried his rows" across the field, carefully tying the shocks of green rustling stalks with bands which he twisted from rye-straw,—a bundle of which he carried with him. He picked up the potatoes, too, as Ozro dug them,—delicate white "Kidneys," blue "Neshanocs," and coarse red "Merinoes." He loitered about the orchard while the apples were gathered, and when the weather grew colder settled down to the work of husking corn upon the barn-floor.

With him all the time was the asthmatic stranger, Mr. Jackson, become now a regular denizen of the Inn. He declared that he found the climate good for his disease, though he still wheezed and coughed upon the least exertion, his red lips showing through his stiff black beard, and his eyes almost starting from his head with the force of occasional paroxysms. He had fallen into the ways of the Inn with wonderful facility. Of late he had passed most of his evenings in the ghost-chamber, where Ozro worked at night and on stormy days perfecting his inventions, sitting by the hearth

smoking, and wearing always his wide-brimmed hat, while he talked to the young man, to whom he had apparently taken a special liking. So a light burned brightly again in the windows, and a cheerful fire shone on the long-deserted hearth.

As the stranger wandered about with Lonny Button, he told him of the wonders of the West and South, of which he appeared to have seen about all that was then accessible to the civilized foot. It was long since the old man had manifested so much interest in anything as in this eccentric stranger. He still alternately praised and grumbled at Ozro; but the stranger easily changed his mood, and seemed determined to establish pleasant relations between the dwellers at the Inn. As for Dotty, he captured her good-will at the outset by this course. She had from childhood been the washer that kept down the friction of the contrasted elements in her home. Her mother's unrelenting sense of duty, her father's moody querulousness, the strange attachment of the one and dislike of the other for Ozro, had made her work, not exactly of peace-making but of harmonization, one of no little difficulty. Her success had not been complete until the coming of the stranger. He seemed to please alike the garrulous father and the fanatical mother.

As a result of this, Ozro and Dotty had been much together. During the soft autumn days she often drove the horse at the cider-mill, and stole out to the barn more frequently than seemed to her father absolutely needful while Ozro was drawing in the grain. But Dotty had great interest in material things, and it did seem as if finally a bright future was coming to be a possibility for those she loved.

Ozro was very cheerful, as behooved one before whom such bright prospects were opening, but was very much absorbed in his work, — so much so, indeed, that Miss Dotty was not at all satisfied with his demeanor. All her little coquettish wiles seemed to have no power to draw him from his absorption. The farm by day and his inventions by night appeared to engage his whole attention. If guests came, they but added to his preoccupation. She gave him every opportunity to renew the courtship he had pressed for one day with such confusing and unexpected ardor ; but he seemed to have forgotten how to make love. It was true she had stipulated that she should not give a final answer until Christmas ; but he need not have taken her so literally, she thought. Perhaps she would have been willing to decide

before ; he might at least have shown that he would like to have her antedate the epoch of his destiny. But Ozro manifested no such desire. Cheerful as he was, and hopeful as he could not help being, he said little of the future, except as it referred to the comfort of their elders. Of himself, of her, of their future, he said little. Kind and pleasant though he was, he uttered no word of pleading, and made no display of lover-like importunity. Once or twice he had kissed her with a passionate warmth that made her heart beat fast ; but not a word of love came from his lips. Now and then, while the stranger talked with her mother before the fire in the dining-room in the evening, she had stolen up to the ghost-chamber, where Ozro was engaged at his work-bench, and though she could not repress a shudder at the memory of its ghastly associations, she sometimes stayed a long time, listening to his explanations of the curious machine he had devised, — explanations she did not at all understand, — but hearing nothing of the explanation a woman is always glad to receive. Dotty wished he would not keep his promise quite so rigidly, and tried in many pretty little ways to let him know it ; but he either would not see, or did not care to see.

Could it be that he did not care? Dotty was a brave girl, but her heart grew sad at the thought; and as the doubt continued to grow, her eyes came to have an anxious look, and her laugh was less frequent and less merry than it was wont to be.

Thus the autumn days went by; the frost bit the green herbage, the wind tossed the dun leaves into great heaps, and the snow came to hide the earth from the bitterness of winter's cold. The Inn had lost something of its mysterious character, and though its custom was not greatly improved, it had taken on a more cheerful aspect than it had known for years. This fact did not escape the eye of Mr. Dewstowe as he reined up to the barn on the day before Christmas. He was driving only the bays this time, for his stock-case was mounted on runners instead of wheels,—the sleighing being perfect, and he being too old a traveller to risk himself very far from his base of operations at that time of the year with a very heavy stock.

The early dinner was over, but Dotty soon placed an appetizing repast upon the table, to which the travelling merchant did ample justice while chatting gayly with his fair attendant. An

hour afterward the bays were hitched before a light cutter, the pedler's luxurious robes spread over seat and dash, and Ozro, not without qualms which were manfully subdued, saw Dotty's gay-colored hood disappear over the hill in close juxtaposition to Dewstowe's fur-cap. It was nearly dark when they returned. If their departure was a season of merriment, what shall be said of their home-coming. Dotty was in such high spirits that her mother shook her head severely as she noted the sparkle of her dark eyes and the glow of her wind-kissed cheeks. As for Ozro he wondered, as Dotty and her attendant went into the house together while he took the horses to the barn, whether anything beside the wind had kissed her cheeks. He was still thinking of this, sitting beside his work-bench in the ghost chamber, when Dewstowe entered. Mr. Jackson sat in the corner of the fireplace, still wearing the wide-brimmed hat, which he did not discard even at meal-time, and smoking a pipe which he asserted he found better for his asthma than the cigars he had used on his first arrival. This he attributed to his having mixed with the tobacco certain herbs which he had gathered and dried, — a large stock of which hung above the fireplace. Among these were the Indian

Tobacco (*Lobelia inflata*), whose medicinal virtues were at that time highly extolled by men having no little claim to scientific knowledge. So it may be that the stranger's belief was not without foundation. Sitting down in front of the fire, Mr. Dewstowe lighted a cigar and at once opened conversation.

"Well, Evans, how about the inventions? Patents all right?"

Ozro thought there was something unfriendly about the tone of this inquiry. He reasoned with himself quickly that he might be mistaken, however, — the tone might be only in his jealous brain. So he answered pleasantly, —

"All right, Mr. Dewstowe. So are the models. We are ready to begin to make the machines to-morrow."

"Indeed!" said the merchant, with sarcastic good nature. "And you are still well satisfied with them?"

"Oh, entirely."

"And you, Mr. Jackson, does your faith still hold out?"

"There ain't no mistake about their doing the work," wheezed the stranger, taking his pipe from his mouth and putting out his tongue over his red under lip as he spoke.

"Well, that's good, now," said Dewstowe with a curious chuckle. "Will they do anything else,—plant corn or milk cows, for instance?"

"I don't know," said Ozro, somewhat abashed at the merchant's tone rather than at his questions.

"What do you mean?" asked the stranger, sharply.

Dewstowe saw that he must drop his jesting manner. The stranger was not a man to be trifled with.

"I just thought I would ask the inventor," he said jocularly, "whether the machine would do for anything else besides heading pins."

"I don't see any use in its doing anything else," said Jackson, slowly. "That's what it was made for, and that's what it does. That's what we bought it for, and that's what we'll use it for, I reckon."

There was a hint of menace in his tone. He evidently thought the merchant wished to avoid his contract.

"Oh, that's all right," said Dewstowe, quickly. "Good plain contract—made it with our eyes open; and we ain't men that can plead the need of a gardeen either—at least I ain't."

"I've got along without one thus far tolerably well," interjected the stranger, dryly.

"Yes, there ain't no getting around it nor going back on it," said Dewstowe. "It's a nice thing for our friend Evans, too,—shows he was born under a lucky star, you see."

"How so?"

"Well, you know, he'd just come of age that very day, and sold his first find to a couple of old experienced hands like you and me, hiring us to hold the bag while he shook the tree. No, I won't say that; he didn't hire nor persuade us; we just jumped in for fear some one else would get the chance, and it's altogether fair that now we should have to hold on to what we were so anxious to pick up then."

"What do you mean, Mr. Dewstowe?" asked Ozro, with vague apprehension.

"That's what I mean," said the merchant, sharply, facing around toward Ozro and tossing something on the table before him.

Ozro picked it up, glanced at it a moment, and sank back in his chair, his face deathly pale.

"What is it?" exclaimed the stranger, excitedly, as he hurried across the room and caught the package from Ozro's hands.

"Oh, it ain't much," said Dewstowe, jauntily. "It's only a paper of pins with no heads on them at all!"

"No heads!" reiterated the stranger, looking first at the pins and then at Dewstowe, incredulously.

"That's what I said," responded Dewstowe; "just look at them for yourself, though. No wire twisted about *them*. Just a tap on the end with a hammer or something of that sort, and there's your pin, head and all! Bright idea, that! Simpler, cheaper, better than we ever had before. That is what is needed to make an invention valuable, — *certainly* valuable, I mean. This one, now, lays our friend Ozro's plan on the shelf for good and all. There's nothing for it to do, you see. The new pin is better than the old one. No danger of the head coming off while you are picking the baby's ears, you see. No doubt this is a good machine of Mr. Evans's," he went on almost tauntingly, "but if it won't milk cows or dig potatoes, or do something else not in the inventor's mind when he got it up, — and it isn't likely it will, — why, so far as I can see, we may as well pay up, and use it for horse-nails and kindling-wood."

"That means you'd like to rue your bargain, I suppose," said Jackson, using one of those words which gave his speech its foreign flavor.

"Rue?" exclaimed Dewstowe. "Back out, do you mean? Did anybody ever know J. Dewstowe to back down from a bargain? Never! Not if it took his last dollar, which this don't by a good many. No, sir! I can afford to make a bad bargain once in a while. It's a luxury I don't often indulge in, you know. Besides, I have the consolation in this case of doing something to set up a deserving man in business. I'm not specially charitable; but if I've got to lose, I'd rather a decent fellow had it than some mean cuss."

"Perhaps you'd like to sell?" said the stranger, calmly.

"Sell? Now you're talking. But who on earth would care to buy? It's out of season, past the style, creased and shelf-worn, and bad stock generally, you see," said the lively merchant. "There might be something in the machine to stick pins on the paper, that's a fact. These, I think, are still put up by hand," examining as he spoke the new package. "Of course, as the new process makes pins cheaper,

more of them will be used, and there will be more call for the sticking machine. After all, though, there's a good many risks, even about that. Suppose they should take to putting them up some other way, — jamming them right into something a hundred at a time. I am surprised they don't do it; it would beat this paper-sticking business all to rags. No, come to think of it, I don't believe there's anything in it a man would care to buy; so there ain't much chance for a sale."

"I'll buy your share," said the stranger, quietly; "or rather I'll step into your shoes, if you're willing, for we hain't either of us paid anything to speak of yet."

"That'll suit me to a dot," said Dewstowe, quickly. "I'll throw in what I've paid, too. But that of course depends on Mr. Evans. He holds the long gad, just now. Is he willing?"

"I've got the money," said the stranger, looking anxiously at Ozro.

"I don't doubt it, Mr. Jackson," said the young man; "but as Mr. Dewstowe says, this new way of making the heads destroys the value of one of my machines, and makes the other at least doubtful. I don't want any man to pay me for what I haven't got, or to put money in what

is not likely to yield a good return. I do not think the machine that is left is worth the amount you offered, or that you would have offered it for that alone."

"That is for me to decide, I suppose," said the sombre man, with a tone of sullen determination.

"Not entirely," answered Ozro; "besides, I do not propose to allow either my desire or your sense of honor to induce me to take a cent from your hands except for value. If the machine is not worth all and more than you gentlemen agreed to put in it, I do not want your money and will not take it. There is the contract."

As he concluded he threw the paper into the great wood-fire that glowed behind the andirons. The flame caught it; it shrivelled, crackled, flashed up for an instant, and then with a roar was swept up the black jaws of the chimney. The three men looked at each other a moment in silence.

"That was a plucky thing," said Dewstowe, presently, in a tone of genuine admiration. "That was a good paper, with good names on it,—far more than most men would care to throw away."

"Burning a paper don't destroy a contract, young man," said the stranger, sententiously.

"I suppose I can renounce my rights under it, if I choose," said Ozro, impatiently.

"No doubt ; you can release *yours*, but you cannot destroy *mine*. *I've* got an intrust in that paper, or rather in the contract that was writ on it, that I don't propose to give up in that sort of way."

Ozro looked at him with a smile.

"Oh, you may laugh, young man, — you and Mr. Dewstowe, too ; but when Abner Jackson puts his hand to the plough, he don't never look back — never !"

There was something very impressive in the hoarse quavering tones, which was greatly enhanced by the steady, almost fierce, light of his great dark eyes and the gleam of his red lips beneath the stiff mustache, as he stood leaning one arm against the mantel and gesticulating with the smoking pipe held close to the bowl in his other hand.

"It ain't with you as it is with me, gentlemen," he continued. "The Lord guides *my* footsteps, an' I don't dare to despise His instructions. I go where He leads me an' tarry where He bids me stay. He took me by the hand and led me

hither; by the mouth of His servant and prophet He bade me stay till I have served His will and purpose. He moved me by His holy sperrit to take part in the worldly enterprise in which you were about to engage, an' I did it. I don't know why — it may be for your good or for my ondoin' — it don't matter to the servant of the Most High. I felt a call I didn't dare neglect, an' jest went forard where it led. That's why I took an intrust in these things. It was n't because I looked for gain, though I don't deny I thought there was money in them; but the sperrit of the Lord spoke with my lips, an' the contract I made was signed with the seal of the Almighty. I *can't* renounce it nor go back on it, now. That contract's got to be carried out — *to the letter!*"

The curious sing-song recitative which he used and the strange solemnity of his manner gave a sort of weird charm to the stranger's utterances that prevented any inclination to levity on the part of his listeners.

"You don't want to put up and work a worthless machine, do you?" asked Ozro, as soon as he recovered from his surprise.

"The Lord don't require any such foolishness," said Dewstowe, briskly.

"Don't you be setting yourself up to decide what's foolishness in the Lord's eyes an' what ain't," said Jackson, severely. "You're a sharp man in trade, I don't doubt, Mr. Dewstowe; but the Lord He sees in the darkness as well as in the light — to-morrow is as plain to Him as yesterday. I don't say He means us to do a vain thing, and it's borne in on me now that it was n't toward this instrument that the leading inclined. My mind misgave me all the time about the heading-machine. I don't know why; it did its work well. But the Lord He knows, and the heart of His servant is only clay in the potter's hands to Him. So my mind inclined to the other. It's simple, easily made, an' a boy can work it. I don't agree with you, Mr. Dewstowe. There won't be devised no other nor better way of putting up pins for sale. How can there be anything cheaper than a piece of paper; or simpler than turning a crank? Jest give that machine pins and paper, and a boy will put up a thousand thousand pins in a day."

"There's something in that, Mr. Jackson," said Dewstowe, when the wheezy nasal with its strange intonation had ceased.

"Something in it? I should think there was! The Lord's hand is in it," said Jackson,

ferverently, knocking the ashes out of his pipe, and coughing violently.

"Well, I'll take mine out of it, then," said Ozro, pleasantly. "You and Dewstowe may do what you please with it."

"That's right, young man; that's right," said Jackson, between paroxysms of coughing. "You hain't got no call to do anything more with that machine. You've done your work, an' done it well. It's ready for other hands now. It may be mine, or it may be Dewstowe's; I judge it's more likely to be his. If so, it'll be my part to furnish the money, his part to introduce it and persuade men to use it; and whatever comes out of it you'll have your third, remember that. That was our contract, and that can't be varied, — not in substance, I mean, whatever may be done with it in form and detail. But don't you give it no more thought; that ain't what you're for. 'Paul may plant an' Apolyus may water;' but don't let Paul stop planting to help Apolyus do his watering; that's what the text means, I take it. You keep on yer planting; we'll do the watering; an' may God give the increase!" said Jackson, solemnly, casting his eyes upward under the broad brim of his hat.

The unusual excitement brought on a bad spell of coughing. It seemed as if his powerful frame would be riven apart by the violence of his convulsions.

"Can't we do something for you?" asked Dewstowe, in sympathetic alarm.

The stranger put up his hand and shook his head, still coughing.

"Tain't nothing," he said, when the paroxysm had subsided; "nothing to worry about, that is. I've had it these many years, sometimes better'n sometimes worse. Mighty troublesome, but it don't signify nothing. I've been talking too long an' too loud, that's all. I'll go down an' smoke a pipe of this 'ere Injun weed with — with *him* afore I go to bed. I'll be all right in the morning, an' I'll see you then," he remarked to Dewstowe as he went toward the stairs. Before he reached the door he turned, and coming quickly back said, in a solemn voice, as he halted behind Ozro's chair:—

"Have you thought what night it is? Tomorrow will be Christmas."

"*We're* not likely to forget it," said Ozro.

"No, indeed!" said Dewstowe, with a shrug.

"Of course, I might have known *you* would n't forget it," said Jackson, looking tenderly down

at Ozro ; " but don't either of you forget it. It's borne in upon me that to-morrow will be a great an' a notable day to all them that are beneath this roof. Good-night, young gentlemen. Don't sit here an' talk an' plan all night. Your life-lines are crossed an' tangled, but the Lord 'll straighten 'em out. May He have you both in His holy keeping always !" He raised his right hand, and as he ceased speaking let it fall on Ozro's head. After standing thus in silence for a moment, he removed his hand and said in his ordinary tone : —

" Well, good-night. I 'll go an' smoke a pipe with *him*, an' then to bed too."

As he went downstairs, Dewstowe looked across at Ozro and tapped his forehead.

" I don't know," said Ozro, shaking his head ; " he seems right enough in all other respects."

" And in that, too," answered Dewstowe, " if it were not for the reason he gives. There was a deal of sense in what he said."

" Some, perhaps," said Ozro, moodily. Dewstowe did not notice the tone.

" What did he mean by smoking a pipe with '*him*' ?" he asked. " Is fumigation a religious exercise, in which he expects the Almighty to take a part ? "

"No," said Ozro, with a smile ; "that is the way he always refers to Mr. Button."

"Indeed ! And the landlady — how does he designate her ?"

"Always as 'her,' or 'she.'"

"You don't tell me ! Well, he *is* the oddest stick I have ever run across. What do you take him for ?"

"I — don't — know," emphatically.

"He has been here now — "

"Nearly four months."

"Thought so. And no clew ?"

"Not the least."

"Preacher ?"

"Don't think so, — not a Methodist, anyhow."

"No ? Campbellite, perhaps ; lots of them a little farther west."

"Per-haps," doubtfully.

"Has he any business ?"

"None, so far as I know."

"Money ?"

"Yes," promptly and decidedly.

"How much ?"

"I don't know ; all he needs, apparently."

"How long does he intend to stay ?"

"You heard what he said ?"

"Oh, yes ; he acts under orders."

Dewstowe sat back in his chair and whistled softly.

"What did he mean by saying you would not be likely to forget that to-morrow would be Christmas?"

Ozro looked at him in surprise. It had never occurred to him that every one who had heard of the Inn did not know his story.

"My mother —" he faltered.

"I beg pardon," said Dewstowe.

"She died — on Christmas eve," said Ozro, with marked effort.

"I beg pardon," repeated Dewstowe; "I did not know. I will go now before I get into more trouble with my infernal inquisitiveness. Good-night."

He turned back after reaching the landing, however, and asked cautiously: —

"By the way, Evans, how do you suppose this man comes to know so well about — about your mother?"

"I don't know," answered Ozro, in surprise.

"No?" meditatively; "nor what makes him take such a special interest in you, I suppose?"

"No; does he?"

"Well, I should think! Good-night. I am not coming back again."

He laughed, and Ozro heard him humming a merry tune as he went down the stairs. He sat before the fire for a while thinking intently. Then he went to the window and looked out. Letting the curtain fall into its place, he returned to the table, and taking out pen and paper wrote a letter, folded the sheet, sealed it with a wafer, and directed it. Then he took the candle, and crossed the landing to his own room.

ON THE VERGE OF DESTINY.

A STORM had set in with the going down of the sun. The wind blew from the northwest, and brought with it a fine dry snow, which filled the air with stinging missiles and sifted through every nook and cranny. It filled the road with a slippery mealy mass, which did not cling or pack, but only lay like drifting sand, obstructing all passage and quickly obliterating every track. The mistress of the Inn moved uneasily about, watching the storm first from one window and then from another, shaking her head and muttering hoarsely to herself. When the belated stage came up and turned to the porch, as it had rarely done of late, her excitement became intense.

"Jest'such another night," she whispered, as she watched the yellow glare of the lamps and the smoking horses,—"jest such another. I wonder what misfortune this 'll bring!"

She thrust her pale face close to the window, watching for a passenger to alight. There was

none. The driver handed something to Dotty, who had run out upon the porch, and, with a "Merry Christmas" and a saucy compliment, cracked his whip and drove on.

"Only a letter, Mă!" said the girl, entering the room where her mother stood.

"Jest the same! Jest the same!" sighed the careworn woman. "That's all there was that other night. How awfully the wind blows!—jest as it did then. Who is it for, Dotty?"

The girl was holding the letter close to the candle and spelling out the address.

"For all the world!" she exclaimed. "Who do you suppose?"

"Not Ozro?"

"'Mr. Ozro Evans!' Think of that! I hardly knew the name seeing it written out that way. 'T ain't so bad a name after all; and the writing's just beautiful!" she continued, holding it at arm's length. "It's a big one, too. I must run and give it to him."

She started to leave the room, but her mother sprang forward and snatched the letter from her hand, crying with a strange unnatural shrillness: "Not to-night! oh, not to-night, Dotty! Remember, it's the night afore Christmas. Wait till to-morrow, Dotty,—do wait!"

"But Ozro never had a letter before, Mă."

"So much the better; he can wait. Don't let him have it to-night, Dotty."

Seeing her mother's excitement, and fearing its effects, Dotty promised compliance with her wish on condition that she would lie down and keep quiet.

The day's toil and Dotty's soothing finally drove away the terror that beset the weary brain, and the poor woman slept with the dreaded letter clasped close to her heart. In her sleep she moaned huskily of the sad and terrible past. The lips, which nothing could unloose by day, often had the seal of silence removed by sleep, and Dotty had come to know the inmost secrets of her mother's heart,—at least she thought she did.

It was nearly eleven o'clock when Dotty stole out and cautiously opened the door of the public-room. If Ozro was yet in his work-room, she would tell him of the letter that had come. She found her father as usual asleep in his chair before the fire. The door leading to the stairs was open, and the sound of footsteps could be faintly heard in the room above. It was strange! Somehow they seemed stealthy and unusual. Her heart beat quickly as she list-

ened. Now they were coming down the stairs. She hid herself behind the door. As she did so, it flashed upon her that the footsteps did not sound like Ozro's. Whose could they be? Not Mr. Dewstowe's, certainly. Her face flushed at the thought. They came nearer,—down the winding stairs. She wondered if she had yet time to escape. Even while she thought of doing so, a hand touched the casing and a footstep fell upon the floor of the public-room. She heard a labored breathing, and peeping out saw the tall form and white hat of the eccentric stranger. She did not feel at all afraid, but watched him curiously. She was very glad it was not Mr. Dewstowe. The strange guest walked across the room, and stood for a moment looking down at her father.

Poor old man! As the firelight fell upon his face, she saw the marks of suffering almost as plainly as she had been wont to trace them in her mother's countenance. Poor father! Poor mother! What had estranged them? What had given them so much sorrow? She knew her mother thought that Ozro had been wronged; but how, she had never been able to discover. In its most unguarded moments her mother's slumbering brain had never revealed the secret

that had sealed her lips through all those weary years. And this was Christmas Eve,—the anniversary of the misfortune or the crime. The crime! Could there have been a crime? What crime?

The stranger went out of the public-room, and she heard his footsteps going along the porch toward his own. He had chosen since the winter came on a small room at the back of the house, having a fireplace almost as large as that in the public itself. She kept repeating over to herself the words, "Crime! crime!"

Then she thought of the ghost. Surely, if there were such a thing it would walk to-night. Then she wondered what the stranger could have been doing in the room above,—why he walked so stealthily. She wondered if his presence meant any harm to Ozro; then she smiled. Ozro was his special favorite; besides, he could have done no wrong. There was nothing furtive in his manner. Perhaps he had hoped to see the ghost. Her heart stopped beating at the thought. She started as the old clock with many groans sounded the hour of eleven. She had never seen the ghost; now was her chance.

She did not stop to think, but stole noiselessly from her place and ascended the stairs.

The door of the room stood a little ajar. There was a dim light within from the smouldering brands upon the hearth. She pushed the door open softly and peeped carefully within. All was quiet. She could see the whole room dimly lighted by the smouldering fire. It seemed very still. She started when the door creaked uneasily as she pushed it slowly open. She waited a moment; it creaked again. Her heart beat very fast. She felt her flesh creep unpleasantly, but she had no thought of turning back. Swinging the door quickly open she entered. It swung noisily together behind her. She put her hand to her throat and drew her breath in short quick gasps, as she looked apprehensively around, but did not once think of retreat. She had come to see the ghost, and intended to remain until it came, — or at least until the regular hour for ghostly wanderings was past. She stole on tip-toe toward the fireplace, and shrank instinctively into the shadow at its side. After a little she sat down upon the floor, drawing her skirts carefully about her feet as she did so, and rested her arm upon the chair Ozro had occupied a little while before.

She sat here and waited — for what? She smiled as she asked herself the question. She

had never doubted the existence of the ghost. It seemed almost sacrilegious to doubt what had caused so much trouble to her parents. Her father had always attributed all their misfortune to its malign influence. It had blighted the crops, destroyed the cattle, wrecked the schooner, driven custom from the Inn, led to the starting of a rival hostel at Corey's hardly a mile away,—in short, had been the cause of discord, poverty, and woe to the whole household of the Inn, saving and excepting Ozro. It had never troubled him, though he had occupied the room so long. Of late she had come to question some of these conclusions. She saw that no preternatural cause need be assigned to account for her father's ill success; his own neglect and unfortunate predilection for strong drink were sufficient of themselves. But what had made him neglectful and intemperate? Jack, in the first place, of course. She had heard the story told, with tears and sobs, of how her father had encouraged the stiff-necked boy in disregard of the mother's wishes, and finally became his companion and example in dissipation. This state of things the ghost perhaps made worse, but certainly did not originally cause. And then the mother—but here Dotty

always stopped in her attempt to solve the mystery. Something had wrecked her mother's happiness, and that something was mysteriously connected with the ghostly visitant. That much was incontrovertible.

But Ozro, she thought, did not believe in the ghost, or anything connected with it. He had even laughed at the idea; and he had occupied this room night and day for two years. Surely, he ought to know if any one. But perhaps the ghost would not appear to him. Anyhow it was a brave thing, and a shrewd thing too, for him to cut a door through from his room, and hide it so that even she had never suspected it, — though she made his bed every day, — and come into the haunted-chamber to do his work. It was an odd sort of work for him to engage in, too. Who would have dreamed that a farm-boy like him would have thought of such curious inventions? She could dimly see the outline of the machines as the fire flamed up a moment from the falling apart of a log that had been smouldering in the ashes.

It soon died out, but it had given a new turn to her reverie. She thought of Ozro, the conditions she had imposed on him, how manfully he had kept them, how brave and tender he

had always been; and then she wondered that she could have imposed such hard conditions. She had always loved him; but then she had her father and mother to look after. Well, there was no further need to think of that; Ozro's success had decided that. Why, he was rich already! She gave a little laugh as she thought of it. Then she wondered what was the purport of the letter directed to him which her mother had. How well the name looked! She wondered if "Mrs. Ozro Evans" would look as well, and blushed at her own thought.

She had quite forgotten all but her dream. Perhaps she *was* dreaming. At least she did not hear a footfall on the stair beside her — if there was a footfall. She did not hear the door open — if it did open. But she did hear the old clock groan and rattle, and finally strike the hour of twelve. Then she raised her head, looked quickly across the hearth, and held her breath in wonder and affright. Just opposite where she sat, and hardly three steps away, stood the ghost of the Inn.

Dotty did not scream nor faint, but only sat and watched in a sort of dumb amazement, while the figure visited one part of the room and then another, and finally returning to the

hearth disappeared from her sight. When it had vanished, Dotty drew a long breath, and sat gazing intently at the place where she had seen it last. After a time, apparently satisfied that it would not return, she reached out, took up a stick that lay upon the hearth, and pushed the smouldering brands together until they made a blaze that lighted up the whole room. Then she went cautiously to the side opposite the corner which the presence had first visited, and took from between the logs one of the pieces of wooden chinking. From behind this she took something which she carried back to the fire and examined carefully. Her face was very bright when she went softly down the stairs and sought her pillow.

Dotty had begun her preparations for retiring when she noticed something white on the floor near the door. She picked it up, and found it to be a letter addressed to herself. It had been thrust under the door, whose threshold had shrunk away from its lower edge, either as a result of bad workmanship or because the frost had heaved the foundations. As she broke the seal a small parcel fell into her lap. She paid no attention to this, but read :—

DORRY, — To-morrow will be Christmas. I have failed. The invention from which I hoped so much is useless, being forestalled by another which not only does its work, but makes the pin, head and all, at one motion ; at least, I suppose it does, from the result. Mr. Jackson would no doubt pay enough for the other machine to discharge the mortgage ; but it would not be fair to let him do so. This machine does its work well, but it is not worth enough to justify doing anything with it. I believe I shall ultimately achieve success ; but I have not done so yet, and there is always a possibility of the failure of the most sanguine hopes. At least, you have the right to know that I release you from any obligation arising out of the compact, which ends to-morrow. I promised not to ask an extension of time, and will not. If you decide to give your hand to another, I cannot complain. I have had my chance, and failed. Yet if you could trust me with your future and that of your parents, I believe they would be entirely safe ; and I do not need to assure you of my unchangeable love. I write this simply to save you the pain you might feel at having to give me a refusal in words. My presence might unduly affect your judgment, and I know you have need to be very wise. If you feel that you ought to deny me, please remember that he who has loved you so long will do nothing to cause you sorrow now. I may not be able to think of you as a brother should, but I will go away, and give you no reason to regret that I have loved you better.

I enclose a little parcel, which I beg you to accept. If you cannot grant my desire, please to consider these

trifles a present from a very loving brother. Should you wear them to-morrow, I shall know that you have decided to accept my love. If not, I trust that you will wear them first at your marriage, and consider them a wedding present from,

Yours most truly,

OZRO EVANS.

The parcel was a small leather case, fastened with a rusty metal clasp. Dotty opened it, and poured the contents into her hand, regarding them for some moments very seriously. Then she put them back with a sigh and replaced the packet in the letter. She had a puzzled look on her face as she proceeded to disrobe. The night, or what remained of it, did not promise to be a restful one to the pretty Dotty; and it is hardly surprising that she was very much dazed at waking from bewildering dreams much later than usual when Ozro tapped at the door and informed her of the hour. She was no laggard, however, and the breakfast at the Inn was not long delayed by her unusual indulgence.

THE BENISON OF PEACE.

THE morning of Christmas dawned cold and clear. The wind had died away, and the sun sparkled on the white untrodden snow. The dining-room at Button's was an unusually bright apartment. A window opened on the porch both in front and rear, and two more flanked the great chimney on either hand. Through them the sun was now pouring in a flood of chilly light. This room served as the kitchen, too, on ordinary occasions ; there was another for extraordinary purposes, where the weekly baking was done in the big Dutch oven that stood at the back of the house. Around the great hickory fire that blazed on the hearth were being carried on the preparations for breakfast. Kettles hung upon the crane, potatoes were roasting under the ashes in the corner, a johnny-cake was growing brown on a board inclined before the fire, and a tray of biscuit were showing circles of white flaky puff beneath the ardent reflections of a bright tin

"baker" that obtrusively monopolized one side of the glowing fire.

The long white table was scrupulously clean, but quite devoid of napery. Little steel-blue knives, with pointed blades and small bone-handles, lay beside the plates. The landlady stood at the head of the table, the end farthest from the fire, — making it seem all the colder from the chilling whiteness of her presence. The company came in headed by the landlord, having been summoned from the public by Dotty. She had called Ozro from the porch also, who had answered by a cheery hail from the barn. When the company had taken their places, — Jackson on the landlady's left, and Dewstowe next to Dotty's vacant place upon her mother's right, Dotty herself standing by the fireplace ready to serve the smoking dishes that stood on the hearth, — the landlady, with a severe glance up and down the table, bent over it, clasped her wrinkled hands, closed her eyes, and moved her lips. No audible sound escaped them, but every one knew she was asking a blessing, and bowed his head reverently over his plate.

"Amen," said the asthmatic stranger, hoarsely, as she changed her position and placed one hand on the great coffee-pot by her side.

The others changed their positions also,—turning the blue-edged plates face uppermost, grasping their knives and forks, and waiting for the good things that Dotty was already busy in placing upon the table.

The hum of conversation arose. The landlord offered each of his guests a glass of hot punch “to keep out the cold,” he said.

“And with the compliments of the season, too, I suppose?” said Dewstowe, as he lifted the steaming glass to his lips.

The landlord looked at his wife, uneasily. Ozro entered at this moment from the back porch, his face dripping from a morning ablution of icy water. He rubbed it vigorously with the towel hanging near the door, combed his hair at the glass, which was moved inside during the winter, and sat down next to Dewstowe.

“Hello, Evans!” said the latter; “find it cold this morning?”

“Pretty sharp.”

“How are the bays?”

“All right.”

“Ready for a Christmas sleigh-ride if I can find a girl willing to risk the weather?”

“I guess so,” said Ozro; “but the girl will need to be plucky.”

"How *is* the weather?" asked one of the travellers. "Pretty tough?"

"Well," answered Ozro, with a shrug, "I think I've seen it worse."

"And better, no doubt?" said Dewstowe.

"I should say so."

"Drifted?" asked the traveller.

"Not bad. The track is a little mealy; but it did n't pack."

"You think a horse could get along?" was the anxious inquiry.

"Oh, yes! It might be a little heavy, and the weather is certainly severe; but the road is passable."

"Do you hear that, Miss Dotty?" asked Dewstowe. "What do you say to having a Merry Christmas?"

"I *mean* to have one," responded the girl, saucily, seating herself by Ozro, and adding significantly; "as I hope every one under this roof may have."

"Dotty!" said her mother, severely.

"Oh, I mean it, Mă! and I hope every one here will stay with us to-day, and have a real Merry Christmas!"

"Button's Inn never makes no charges to a traveller that stays over Christmas," said the

landlord, with rude courtesy, — “nothing but horse-feed, that is. It can’t exactly be said that we keep open house that day,” he added, with awkward embarrassment; “but we set a free table, and they do say that a Christmas dinner at Button’s is not a thing to be sneezed at. I invite you all, gentlemen. I can’t make it as lively as I could wish, but you’re welcome, gentlemen, very welcome.”

He made a comprehensive gesture toward the table with his half-empty glass, and then raising it to his lips drained the contents, and placed it bottom upward on the table. The landlady bowed first to one side of the table and then to the other with simple dignity, and repeated in the hoarse whisper, with occasional hints of vocalism, which was her ordinary speech: —

“Very welcome, very welcome, you and all those that may come on this blessed day! We do not have any merry-makings, for this is a day of sorrow under this roof, and sackcloth and ashes become us that dwell here better than vain and frivolous conversation. But while we don’t hold with feasting and gluttony, we ask our friends to eat and drink with us in memory of Him who came an humble guest at another Inn on this blessed day.”

She bowed her head as she ceased speaking. Everybody knew what the sorrow was to which she alluded ; a solemn silence pervaded the company, which was broken by the hoarse but impressive tones of Mr. Jackson, who, raising his head, exclaimed : —

“Peace be within these walls !”

A murmured “Amen,” came from the lips of several of the guests, who thus accepted him as their spokesman, regarding his words as a response to the invitation tendered by the keepers of the Inn.

“I am much obliged,” said the traveller who had manifested such anxiety as to the state of the weather, “but if the road is at all passable, I must press on. I have a wife and three little ones at home, of whom I have not heard for several months. I left them among strangers while I returned East to settle up some matters that could not be attended to without my presence. When I heard from them last, my wife was ill. I wrote two months ago, telling her I would certainly be back by Christmas, but sickness and misfortune have delayed me. I have written several times, but it is doubtful if she has received my letters. It is a wild country where we live, — a long way from a

post-office. Besides," he added, while his lip quivered, "I am afraid to think what their condition may be. I had little money to leave my wife when I came away, but she thought they could get along during the summer until my return. I dread to think what may be the situation of my family now that winter has come on."

His story was listened to with sympathetic attention. It was a phase of that new western life with which every one was familiar, and consequently able to realize. The traveller was making the journey on horseback, and the heavy roads and severe weather made it very trying to a man just risen from a sick bed; but he thought nothing of himself,—only of the anxious, perhaps suffering ones at home. He had still a week or more of travel before him. His horse was in good condition, and if the weather permitted he hoped to get home by New Year's; but he could not delay.

"Well," said Dotty, while the tears glistened in her eyes, "you shall not lose your Christmas dinner anyhow. If you have room in your saddle-bags I will put you up a lunch that will make you remember Button's until you reach home at least."

"This used to be an inn," said the landlord with a touch of pride, "of which they said it 'welcomes the coming, speeds the parting guest.' We wish you a safe journey, sir, and that you may find your family well and happy when you reach them."

The landlord's speech was greeted with approving comment. Every one remarked more of the old time suavity, which had made him at one time the popular host, than had appeared in his demeanor for several years. His wife regarded him with surprise not unmixed with displeasure. She could not understand it.

"And that reminds me, Miss Dotty," said Dewstowe, glancing meaningly at the landlord's daughter, "that if you are kind enough to give me your company for the ride you promised last night, we may as well do a good turn to our friend who is so anxious to get home."

"How so?" was the demure response.

"You heard Ozro say how heavy the road is. Now the bays are perfectly able to break it with only a light cutter behind them, while our friend's horse would have a hard time wallowing through the frozen sand, — for a snow of this sort is nothing less than sand. It does n't make a road impassable exactly, but it will take

more out of a horse going the same distance than any other sort of track I ever travelled. We might take him down to the Shore road and perhaps a few miles along that in the sleigh, leading his horse behind, which will then be fresh for his journey."

"That's so," said the landlord, heartily. "Good idee, too. Of course Dotty'll go."

"We do not engage in any sort of frivolity or pleasure-seeking here on Christmas, Mr. Dewstowe," said the landlady, severely.

"But this is not pleasure-seeking, — this is charity," was the bland reply. "Who would think of getting pleasure out of a ride in such weather as this."

"Then why do you want Dotty to go?" asked the landlady, relaxing slightly her austere demeanor. "I'm sure it is not necessary she should go with you to break the road."

"Not to break the road, Ma'am," answered Dewstowe, politely, "but to hold me up to my good resolutions. I assure you it takes a bigger lot of virtue than I usually have in stock to induce me to leave the comforts of the Inn to do an act of charity, especially on such a day as this. You need n't fear; we'll be back in time for the merry-makings."

"Young man!" said the landlady with unusual sharpness of speech, "do you know what happened in this house eighteen years ago to-day?"

"Eighteen years!" repeated Dewstowe, meditatively, "I don't believe I remember it. That was quite a while before I took to the road. As near as I can recollect, I was studying navigation on the canal during the summer, and mastering the rule of three in the district school, winters, about that time. I hope it was nothing that will prevent any one from having a Merry Christmas to-day."

"There will never be any more merry-makings in this house," responded the landlady, solemnly, "till the wrong that day committed has been atoned."

"Now, Mä," said Dotty, protestingly, "I do think we ought to stop thinking of such things, and let Ozro have one pleasant Christmas at the Inn before he goes away."

"Who says he's going away?" asked the landlady, excitedly.

"That's what he says," said Dotty, demurely; "and I think that if you won't let us have any merry-makings, nor even give him the Christmas present Santa Claus has brought, I would go if I were in his place."

"Christmas present! What do you mean?" exclaimed her mother; but her hand sought her bosom, and her face turned a shade paler as she did so.

"Why, the letter the stage-driver brought Ozro last night," answered Dotty, "wasn't that a Christmas present? I'll bet that was what it was meant for; yet you have n't given it to him."

"A letter!" exclaimed Ozro, in surprise.

"Oh, yes!" said Dotty; "people get letters sometimes as well as write them, don't they?"

"I suppose so," was the dubious answer.

"Well, there was one came for you last night, but Mă would n't let me give it to you for fear it might disturb your sleep, — give you bad dreams, you know. She thinks people never write letters unless they have something unpleasant to say."

"She's more'n half right in that, too," said the landlord.

"There's harm enough come to you and yours from letters received under this roof. I didn't want you to have it on that account, Ozro, — and I'm glad I lost it; for I *have* lost it," said the landlady with emphasis.

"No matter, Mother," said the young man, soothingly, "it'll turn up sometime; and if it does n't, it will make no difference to me."

"You think it won't, eh?" said Dotty, archly. "Now, I found that letter, and was going to give it to you; but if that is the way you speak of it, I guess I'll just put it in the fire. Shall I?"

She took the letter from her pocket and held it toward the fireplace.

"Don't touch it, Ozro! Don't touch it!" almost shrieked the landlady. "It's writ for all the world in the same hand as those that come to your poor mother and made all the trouble,—all the trouble!" she repeated, shaking her head solemnly. "It's bad luck to get letters of a Christmas Eve,—bad luck!"

"Do you think so, Ozro? Do you think Christmas-Eve letters are unlucky?" asked the girl, teasingly, as she held the letter toward the fire.

He glanced at her sharply, and said in a meaning tone, —

"It would seem so."

Dotty's face flushed as she answered, —

"Then I'll always send back those I get that night. Don't you think I'd better? But for this, I've changed the luck, you know. I kept it under my pillow and dreamed on it all night, and now make you a Christmas present of it —with a kiss."

She kissed the letter coquettishly as she handed it to him.

"Now wish before you open it!" she said imperiously, as he began to break the seal.

"And will I get my wish, if I do?" he asked earnestly.

Her eyes sparkled with fun as she returned his gaze, but she said demurely enough:—

"Oh, I hope so, certainly! I've done all I can to change your luck."

"Do you always distribute your kisses by letter, Miss Dotty?" asked Dewstowe, jocosely. The little by-play between Dotty and Ozro had removed all traces of solemnity, and a ripple of laughter greeted this sally.

"Always!" replied Dotty, as she passed around a hotplateful of toasted slices of "rye and Indian," which was a favorite breakfast-dish of that day.

"Well," said Dewstowe, with mock resignation, "I don't like 'em that way; but rather than not get any at all, I think I'd try a dozen or so in that style."

"If you are not careful what you say, sir," said Dotty, shaking her finger at the pedler, "I shall let you go alone on your mission of charity."

"Oh, I'm safe enough! You've promised!" was the careless reply.

"A bad promise is better broken than kept," came hoarsely from the landlady's lips.

"Just so," said Dewstowe, with the touch of irony he always used when speaking to the landlady; "but this happens not to be a bad one. Besides tending to my moral improvement, it helps the traveller on his way."

The landlady did not answer, but a glance at Dotty told her displeasure at the arrangement.

Ozro had opened his letter, and scanned its contents slowly. As the landlady had said, it was the first he had ever received by post. From address to signature, it all seemed strange, unreal, impossible to him. It was written in a hand he did not know, by one he had never seen, and came from a place where he had never been. He did not understand it, and yet what he read made his hand tremble and his face grow pale.

"What is it, Ozro?" asked Dotty, who had been watching him narrowly as he read. She had set the plate of brown slices on the end of the table, and now stood by her father's side, with one hand resting on the back of his chair, while she gazed anxiously at Ozro. "What is it?" she repeated. "Do tell us!"

The young man finished the perusal of the letter, looked around him in a dazed uncertain way, and said:—

"I must go away — at once."

"To-day!" exclaimed Dotty, clasping her hands and catching breath.

"No; to-morrow."

"I knew it! I knew it!" moaned the landlady, throwing down her knife and fork, and beginning to weave back and forth in her chair, as was usual with her under great excitement.

"I knew no good would come of it. I dreamed that *she* came and took it from me; and I was in hope that the evil would pass by, the curse be removed, the wrong righted, and the sin fairly atoned for before he went out from under this roof. It won't ever be done now, — never! The curse that rests upon this house will be fulfilled. There was n't but one way out of it, and that's closed. Oh, the sin and the shame!"

Ozro and Dotty both sprang to her side.

"Don't, Mother, don't!" exclaimed Ozro, anxious to avoid a repetition of the scene he had once witnessed. "I am sure it is all a mistake. There is nothing to atone, nor any sin or shame to regret. No one here ever did any harm, or meant any harm, to my mother or to me."

"You're right there! You're right there! damned if you ain't. I'm sorry to swear, bein' it's Christmas, but there ain't any other way.

You're right, I say. D' ye hear, Ozro? I did'n't ever expect to say it; but you're right! 'Tain't nateral you should be, seein' how sot she's always been on settin' ye wrong; but you're right all the same. Nobody 'bout Button's Inn ever meant harm to you or yourn. I may have been pretty ha'sh sometimes, but I did'n't mean no harm. Come an' shake hands, boy, and let by-gones be by-gones. Don't let's part with any hard feelin's!"

The landlady sprang from her chair at these words, and in a strange intermitted shriek exclaimed:—

"Don't ye do it, Ozro! Don't ye do it! Let him pay what he owes before ye touch his hand in friendship! It's well enough to forgive, but let him bring forth fruits meet for repentance first!"

"I don't owe him nothin'!" thundered the landlord, bringing his fist down savagely on the table,— "not a dollar! not a copper! I never used a shillin' that belonged to him or his! There 't is now," he continued, throwing a package on the table,— "every cent on 't, an' the pocket-book it was in, too. Look at it if ye want to! I might have taken keer of it, I s'pose, and not let the banks break an' leave it all sp'ilt and wuthless now. I was wrong there, probably;

but 't wa' n't my business, — at least I thought 't wa' n't. I was n't your gardeen ; an' nobody asked me for it, but jest went on an' acted as ef I 'd stole from a dead woman an' robbed a baby ! 'T wa' n't nateral fer me to act right under them circumstances, was it now ?" he asked appealingly of Ozro.

There was great confusion about the table. Most of the guests had risen during this unpleasant altercation. Dotty stood by her mother's chair holding her apron to her lips, while the tears ran down her cheeks. Ozro was thoroughly astounded. Dewstowe reached over, took up the package, opened it, and hastily ran over the amount of the bills.

"Three hundred and sixty dollars," he said ; "every one on a broken bank. Gad ! It shows the mutability of earthly affairs, especially of banks, don't it ?"

The landlady seemed astounded at what she saw. Her manner was still stern, but her voice had returned to its accustomed whisper as she said : —

"And the jewels — give up the jewels that ye took !"

"I don't know nothin' 'bout 'em ! Nothin' 'bout 'em !" said the landlord, with a vigorous

repelling gesture. "Never see 'em, an' never touched 'em. An' more'n that, I don't b'leve Jack ever did. How should he?"

At this point all eyes were turned upon Mr. Jackson. He had risen in his place, and extended his hand authoritatively over the table.

"Silence!" he commanded, in the stern wheezing tone that characterized him. His eyes seemed bloodshot under the white brim of his hat, his dark cheek was pallid with excitement, and his stiff mustache bristled above his red lips. Tone, gesture, and mien were all those of a man accustomed to command.

"Silence!" he repeated; and when all were still, gazing at him with awed expectation, he added: "It is not fit that the birthday of Jesus of Nazareth should be profaned by such unseemly accusations or unholy wrangling. The past does not live forever. Its sins, as well as its joys, decay. The future cometh on apace. Sorrow is not always service. Youth praises God with the sound of rejoicing even better than age with tears and sackcloth! Whatever the woes of the past, let this be a day of gladness! Let this be a Merry Christmas, whatever they have been that have gone before. Young woman, you were right! Go with Mr. Dew-

stowe, and bid thy neighbors to the merry-making here to-night. Young man, let not the shadow of departure darken the day that is before you! Woman, look upon your husband! Husband, look upon your wife! So shall ye serve God with acceptance, and the darkness of the past shall fade away before the exceeding brightness of the future. For such is the covenant He hath made with His people, and which in these latter days shall be fulfilled!"

He looked upward and raised his right hand as if in direct appeal to heaven as he concluded.

There was a strange look of exaltation on his face, and a peculiar dignity of mien and gesture that commanded silence and awakened wonder.

"Who are you?" asked the landlady, gazing fixedly at him after a moment.

"I am one that cometh in the name of the Lord, and by commandment of the Prophet whom He hath chosen and ordained to bring peace to this household; and in his name I now proclaim, 'Peace be within these walls!' — the peace that cometh down from heaven, the peace that passeth all understanding, be with you all this day and forever!"

He removed his hat before uttering these words. When he did so he presented a singular appearance. In the midst of his luxuriant jet-black hair, beginning a little to the left of the middle of the forehead, and running diagonally backward nearly to the crown, was a strip, two fingers or more in width, of perfect silvery whiteness. Taken in connection with his swarthy cheeks, dark eyes, and heavy brows and beard, the effect was very singular, — almost startling.

The company dispersed from the breakfast-table in silence, the landlord remarking, as he went with them along the porch to the public-room : —

“ ‘T ain’t nateral ! ‘T ain’t nateral ! He means well, no doubt, an’ is a good man beyond question ; but ‘t ain’t nateral to turn back what’s been getherin’ head for eighteen years in one day ! It’s my luck, — perhaps it’s my fault, too, — but it’s over now, and past mendin’ by anybody.”

Dotty and her mother began to clear away the dishes. Ozro sat down again in his place at the table, thoroughly dazed by what had occurred. Dewstowe handed him the money and pocket-book with the remark : —

"Not a very valuable inheritance!"

Ozro looked at it, but said nothing. Dotty watched him anxiously.

"Are we to have our ride?" asked Dewstowe, approaching her.

"Yes, go your ways," said Mr. Jackson. "Invite all the people in the neighborhood, and let there be such a merry-making as the Inn has not seen in a score of years."

The landlady looked up as if to object, and then cast down her head in quiet submission. Dotty and Dewstowe exchanged glances.

"For you," said Mr. Jackson, approaching Ozro and laying his hand upon his shoulder, "if the matter of your letter does not require your attention, I should be glad of your company for a short time. When you return," he added, turning to Dewstowe, "I may wish to have some words with you. As I have said, young men, your life-lines are curiously crossed, and it is for you to see that you do not get 'em fouled so as to suffer harm."

AFTER MANY DAYS.

MR. JACKSON'S peculiarities, not to say eccentricities, were so marked that he was rarely referred to by his name, even by the people of the Inn, but remained as he had been styled at first, — "the stranger." Somehow he seemed foreign to their life, and equally foreign to that of the ordinary traveller. He had shown the utmost friendliness, and taken a great interest in all the affairs of the Inn, but had not intermeddled nor manifested any undue familiarity. His religious views had been a matter of considerable speculation in the neighborhood. There could be no question as to the profoundly religious tendency of his nature, nor was there any doubt in the minds of the people as to the sincerity of his professions. He attended the religious gatherings held within reasonable distance of the Inn, seeming to be equally at home in all without regard to sect. His devotional aspect, absorbed attention, and general impressiveness of manner affected all very favorably,

and made Methodists and Baptists alike anxious to claim him as one of themselves. But when they approached him in regard to his own sectarian views and affiliations, the result was eminently unsatisfactory. He seemed not inclined to doctrinal disquisition, or to argument of any kind. Indeed, there was a brevity and sternness about him that smacked more of command than of importunity. He was one of those men whose peculiar manner impresses even strangers with the impulse of obedience, and the expectation of ready compliance with his wish had apparently been confirmed by the habit of command. Though he took no part in any religious exercises, except by giving strict attention and making occasional responses, all deferred to him in a manner, and all looked upon him as an exemplary and godly man. Efforts to induce him to express a preference for one creed or another were, however, futile. Every one knew that a man of such a positive character could not fail to have fixed and positive religious convictions ; but what his were, no one could determine. He had been driven by dint of much indirect inquiry — for he was by no means a man to whom one would care to put leading questions in regard to what he

manifested no inclination to speak about — to admit that he was not “exactly” a Methodist, nor “exactly” a Baptist; and he was known to be neither a Congregationalist nor a Presbyterian. As these were the chief sects of this region, whose life sprung almost entirely from New England, it was quite impossible for the gossips of the neighborhood to determine “exactly” what he was.

The border-land that lies between an established civilization and a new one is always fertile in religious ideas. Not only does a new creed usually bring with it a new political and social life, but such new life most frequently offers occasion, if it does not develop the need, for a new belief. Out of the relations between Egypt and Israel sprang Judaism; while the domination of the Roman, by weakening popular faith in the Mosaic system, opened the way for a broader and nobler ideal. Out of these came the opportunity of Christianity. So too with Christian sects; new forms and new dogmas have ever abounded on the borders of the new civilizations which they have encountered. Luther and Calvin and Knox were not less the products of disturbed political and social conditions than the proximate causes of religious

convulsion. Our American border-life was peculiarly fecund in such religious movements. Solitude is the nurse not only of inspiration, but also of self-delusion. The forest and the desert are especially the nurseries of prophets and pretenders. There is something about the silence and seclusion in which man walks the very lord of all he sees, that builds up his self-reliance and exalts the consciousness of individual power to a point rarely if ever attained by those dwelling in the midst of crowded populations. The cloister may offer a temporary and imperfect substitute, but the divine frenzy that comes only from undoubting confidence in one's own convictions is rarely found in the city-bred enthusiast. In him there is always something that smacks of pretence and design. He who looks often in the faces of men is sure to fear the multitude. Public opinion flexes his judgment, and the fear of ridicule makes him a coward. It is only in the man whose surroundings compel habitual self-communing, and yet are not of overwhelming grandeur, that conviction grows strong enough to become an unquestioning faith, not in another's teachings, the doctrines of a particular sect or the tenets of a special creed, but in the results of his own solitary meditation.

The presence of the multitude crushes out individuality. It may quicken the pulse, sharpen the wit, and improve the externals, but it breaks down the confidence of man in his own conclusions, motives, aspirations, and beliefs.

So, too, the wilder forms of Nature are not conducive to the highest individualism. The silence and sameness of the forest; the dull level of the unbounded desert; the fen, with the sea sobbing among its rushes, but the limitless power of its breakers held at a distance from the accustomed haunt, — these and other forms of less striking solitude have ever been the surroundings in which man has reached the climax of individual power. From Moses to El Mahdi the prophets who have left the impress of their faith on thousands or millions of followers have had this training. Remoteness from the centres of humanity and a not too near exposure to the grander forms of Nature, — these two things seem to be essential to the perfection of individual power. The rugged mountain-range and the boisterous ocean-shore have never been fertile in religious phantasies, or productive of great natural leaders. The moor, the forest, the desert, and the shore of the inland sea may nourish religious contemplation until the saint

becomes a seer, and the seer a prophet who deems himself divinely ordained to do the work of the Almighty. The ocean, with its eternal symphony of terror, crushes out speculation, thrills the soul with awe, until it shrinks within itself and clamors for external aid, and inclines the mind not to speculation and dissent, but to faith and superstition. He that dwells by the seashore is almost always a believer. He may be an enthusiast, but he is rarely a doubter, and never a promulgator of strange doctrines or new beliefs.

Our Western forests nourished prophets and messiahs by the score. New sects and new creeds sprang up under their shadow almost as readily as new towns and new States. Freedom from the restraint of old institutions encouraged also freedom of religious belief. There were "Free" Baptists, "Free" Presbyterians, "Free" Methodists, and even "Free" Quakers; a like series of "Independents" and sects distinguished from other known bodies by special prefixes such as "Christian," "Protestant," or "Primitive," as well as many having entirely new and self-distinguishing names and holding special unrelated tenets. It was at this time that the witty Frenchman spoke of our country as a land

of "one hundred religions and but one sauce." It was true; for the first half of this century our country was a hot-bed of new beliefs. Infinite space and unechoing solitude, in a climate compelling mental activity, incline a people always to the contemplation of infinite subjects, — questions in regard to the divine essence, purpose, and attributes. Until the thirst for wealth became a universal disease, and Mammon set up his golden idol for us to worship, the American people were among the most religiously inclined of any in the world, — perhaps more than any that the world has known since the overthrow of the Jewish hierarchy. There was little harmony in form or method, but there was universal accord in result. To be religious, to believe in something, and believe in it with might, mind, soul, and strength, was accounted the first duty of man. The young might be permitted to be frivolous and even profane, but with arrival at maturity a sober religious cast of mind was expected. They were exceedingly lax in the observance of formal laws of the Church as well as of the State. Of frivolity there was very little. Christmas was curiously regarded. Religious service was generally held on that day, but it was not popularly observed

as a day of merry-making. It was rather a supernumerary Sabbath than a holiday, in the ordinary acceptance of the term. In fact, mirth and gladness were divorced from religion, except it was a state of religious exaltation bordering on frenzy, which was accounted the inexpressible and exclusive joy of the believer. The forest did not make them more religious than other people, in the sense of scrupulous observance of forms or ceremonies, or strict adherence to the letter of the law. But united with the political impulse toward individualism, it gave us a phenomenal independence of authority, united with a universally religious cast of thought, which has produced some strangely discordant results. Much that came from these conditions was good and admirable; some of it was whimsical, and some monstrous.

This religiousness did not consist in careful and anxious observance of ceremonial or the unquestioning acceptance of any particular form of belief, but rather in a universal tendency to speculation in regard to religious matters. Every one might not have his own distinctive creed, but he was pretty sure to have his own construction of accepted dogmas. It was the outcome of the personal piety of the Puritan,

colored by the contempt for authority and all forms of external restraint, which marked the Yankee in his westward course across the continent. Learning was almost as little esteemed as authority; neither were thought essential to a knowledge of the divine will or conducive to divine favor. Individual consciousness was exalted to a level with the inspired Word. The "witness of the spirit" made all men equal. The most unlearned disputed with confidence with the wisest on the subtlest points of doctrine. Men believed that they "walked with God" in an almost literal sense. Communion with the Divine — direct and conscious influence and inspiration — was a usual rather than an exceptional form of belief and experience. The most marvellous of miracles was the most commonplace incident of an ordinary religious experience. Intelligence intensified rather than lessened this curious effect, because intelligence recognized the supernal, and could not deny the miraculous experience of one while admitting that of another.

In other lands and other times such religious exaltation has expended itself in the zealous observance of special rites, in mortifying penance, in the worship of saints, and abject obe-

dience to ecclesiastical authority. None of these marked the great tide of religious sentiment that swept over the land during the first half-century of our national existence. The overthrow of political authority had generated an absolute contempt of ecclesiastical restraint. Toleration had reached its utmost limit. Religiousness of any sort was respected and respectable: irreligion of the very mildest character was counted little less than a crime. Sects multiplied so that it was almost impossible to say where one ended and another began. Men spoke as familiarly of their relations with God as with each other. Repentance formed an impenetrable cloak for all irregularities of life. Appeal from the authorities of the various churches "to the Most High God and the American people" was open to all, and was made with little hesitation. Piety meant personal communion with Deity; from that to specific revelation was but a brief step.

Out of this almost universal sense of immediate contact with the Deity came more than one curious result, — tolerance and intolerance, credulousness and unbelief, new sects, new methods, new doctrines, and one absolutely new religion. Prophets by the score arose proclaiming new ways

and new tenets, but only one had the boldness to overleap the confines of Christian faith and proclaim an absolutely new dispensation. At first, even this new theosophy did not seek to disturb the established order. It inculcated temperance, industry, and, without proclaiming community of goods, made want impossible and poverty exceedingly rare among its votaries. It based its claims not on a complete and finished revelation, but on a continuing inspiration, a living prophet, and a cumulative law. Strange enough, this sect took its rise and secured its first foot-hold in the most religious and intelligent part of the country. — western New York and northern Ohio. At the time of which we write it was just assuming definite form. Since then it has dropped some of its vagaries and assumed more definite and distinctive features. Though the name of Jesus Christ was assumed as a part of its titular appellation, it retained little of the accepted Christian idea except that of immediate personal intercommunion with the Deity which American Christianity had carried to such an unprecedented length. Doctrinally speaking, Mormonism is but an exaggeration of the idea of personal communion, control, and direction which pervaded the re-

ligious atmosphere of that day. It is a religion of intermitting revelation, of present miracles, and continuing prophetic guidance. The breaking down of ancient barriers brings sometimes liberty and sometimes licence. The "internal light" of the Friends is but little removed from the claim of prophetic inspiration of the Mormon and the miraculous "witness of the Spirit" on which other Christian sects insist with more or less emphasis. The idea of personal guidance by signs and tokens of the divine will, which was so notable a characteristic of the Puritan faith, yielded some strange fruits when freed from the restraints of established institutions, and removed from the atmosphere it had created for itself in New England. Of these, by far the most notable was the new religion which sprang up in the very midst of the best life of the land, has now become the established belief of more than a quarter of a million souls, and presents to-day one of the most difficult questions that has ever come before the American people for solution.

Socially, as well as religiously, this was a period of peculiar interest. It was the unrecognized nidus of forces unparalleled in history. Hand and brain were just awakening to a new

life. So swift has been our subsequent development, that it seems as if until that time man had only slumbered on the earth. As yet wealth was little esteemed as an index of social rank. The richest and the poorest stood on the same social level. In fact the rich were very few, and the very poor were fewer still. Luxuries were rare, but of necessities there was so general an abundance as to amount almost to universal superfluity. The reign of machinery had hardly begun. The locomotive was scarcely a recognized factor of transportation; paper was yet made by hand; cast-iron stoves and plows were almost unknown; nails were still made by the smith. Invention had hardly opened the door of wonderland. American mechanical genius yet lay in chrysalid slumber. One clerk in the office of the Secretary of State did all the work of granting patents to our inventors until the year before Ozro's application was made. In the first half century of our government there were issued barely ten thousand patents,—as many are granted now in half a year. At the time of which we write the Patent Office, just established as a separate bureau, consisted of a Commissioner and three clerks. Even these found the time to hang heavy on their hands.

That year another clerk was added, and the administration was attacked for extravagance in consequence.

A simple people standing on the verge of an epoch of unparalleled material prosperity, but as yet concerned more with religious and political speculation than with the competition for wealth, composed the two great tides of life which radiated from two great centres,—the one at the East and the other at the South,—over all that constitutes our present national domain.

To such people the religious proclivities of a man like Mr. Jackson were a matter of serious speculation,—to none more so than to the landlady of the Inn whose religious intensity found in his stern, almost ascetic, fervor a kindred sentiment. With her it was no question of approval. To whatever sect he might belong she recognized not only the divine nature of his zeal, but felt that his associations must have had something to do with shaping his religious character. She was predisposed after four months' scrutiny of his blameless life to recognize in this unyielding pietist not only a man of high rank in the sect to which he belonged, but one entitled to consideration because of his life and character.

When, therefore, he proclaimed himself in no doubtful tones "the servant of the Most High God," she yielded submissively to his dictation. He was not indeed like other men, and taught not like other religious teachers. The imperiousness of undoubting faith and the sincerity of a zeal which even the fear of martyrdom could not quench showed in his demeanor and thrilled in his hoarse, rasping tones. He was one of those who say even to a stranger, "Go, and he goeth." To her who had noted his demeanor so long; who had seen him retire to his own room three times a day for prayer and meditation; who realized the self-restraint which held him back from participation in the worship of others, yet compelled him to give it the sanction of his presence and approval,—to her he spake with an authority which she did not dream of gainsaying. When he had commanded them to make merry, though her heart was sore and apprehensive of what might be in store for the future, she hardly thought of questioning. Indeed, at that very moment had flashed through her mind the words of the yet unrecognized Messiah, when in that "beginning of miracles" he said to his mother, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" and paying no further heed to her remonstrance,

commanded the wondering servants to "Fill the waterpots with water." She had taken this as a divine behest that she should comply with the wishes of this masterful stranger who had dwelt so long beneath her roof, and was still a stranger. Where he lived, what was his business or position, none knew. He had witnessed strange and stirring scenes of which he sometimes spoke, but without any allusion to himself, except as an eye-witness. He seemed to know all phases of life, and more than once had startled the good woman with that knowledge which brought conviction to the heart of Nathanael, when the Master said to him, "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee." As soon as she could, therefore, she went to her own room to read over again the familiar story of these miracles.

Ozro and Dewstowe had gone to the barn to prepare the horses for the road. Dotty had packed the traveller's luncheon in his saddlebags and returned to finish up the "morning's work." It was no light task, and the mother had left more of it than usual for her to do that morning. She was a brave-hearted, strong-limbed girl, however, and went out and in about

her work as blithe and cheerful as if it had no hint of hardship in it. The stranger watched her from the side of the fireplace with evident approval.

"Dotty," he said at length, in a voice tender despite its hoarseness. It was the first time he had ever addressed her so familiarly, and she looked at him in surprise. She was just lifting the tea-kettle to hang it on the crane which swung over the fireplace, holding back her skirts with the other hand as she did so to keep them from the flame.

"Dotty," the stranger repeated with affectionate emphasis, "what would you do if you had a fortune?"

"I'd pay off the mortgage on this Inn for the first thing," said the girl, with prompt decision.

"But suppose that was already paid off?"

"But it ain't, and I cannot suppose anything of that sort!"

"It is, and you shall carry the release to your father presently. *Now* what would you do?"

"Who paid it?"

"I did."

"And you —?"

"I wanted to make a Christmas present."

"And you gave all that?"

"I could give much more and not feel it seriously."

"Why, you must be made of gold!" exclaimed Dotty, in great surprise.

"You see I am not," he rejoined with a laugh that brought on his cough.

"Well, who are you anyhow?"

"An humble servant of the Lord!"

"So you said," responded Dotty, mischievously. "We've had lots of them here, but they are not generally so much inclined to give as to receive."

"To one He giveth thirty, to another sixty, and to another a hundred-fold," said the stranger, solemnly. "The Lord has been very kind to me, and as I have freely received so would I freely give to them He points out to me as faithful trustees of His benefits."

"You don't think I would be?" said the girl in surprise. "I am not one of the elect. I'm not even a 'professor' at all,—Ozro nor I either. It's queer. Mă brought us up very strict, and Ozro's good enough for a whole church; but we ain't 'professors,' and it don't seem like we ever will be."

The girl was washing a great iron spider in the pan of water in which the dishes from the table had been cleansed, as she spoke, holding it by one hand, while she wielded the dish-cloth with the other.

"Well, what would you do with a fortune if you had it?" persisted the stranger.

She rested the edge of the spider on the table, and squeezed the water from the cloth meditatively as she replied: —

"Really, I don't know. Pă and Mă don't need it if the mortgage is paid. Ozro will make enough out of his inventions, and — and — really," she continued turning to him, "I don't see as I should have any use for it."

"How about Mr. Dewstowe?" asked Mr. Jackson, slyly.

"Oh," she answered with a frank smile, "he's got enough of his own."

"So you've no use for money?"

"No — that is — if I knew —"

She hesitated, and looked at her interlocutor half distrustfully.

"Well, if you knew what?" he said encouragingly.

"I don't know as I ought to say what I was going to."

"You need n't be afraid to speak freely to me."

"I am not, sir, but — it is very strange — I don't know — well, it was about my brother Jack, sir. If I — only knew — he was comfortable, sir."

"Your brother Jack!" exclaimed the stranger, with a start. "I thought he was dead?"

"So he may be," said the girl, cautiously. "I only meant if he *was* alive and was — well, say comfortably well off — I should have nothing more to ask for, and would n't know what to do with money, if I had it."

"You don't want a rich husband, then?"

"Oh," she said, resuming her work and wiping out the inside of the spider with the cloth she held in her hand, "I'd like him to be well off of course; but I should expect *him* to take care of that."

"For fear he should not, I want to make you a wedding present; but if I do, you must not let it be known until you are engaged to be married. Do you agree to that?"

"I don't know," said the girl, thoughtfully. "I might think *he* ought to know it even if we were not really engaged, you know."

"Well, at least you would not tell him without first asking me?"

"I don't know, sir," she responded, setting the spider in its place by the chimney-jamb. "I don't believe I would like to have much under such conditions. I would, of course, remember that you did not want me to say anything about it; but I should not like to promise I would not tell if I thought I ought to."

"Well," said he, laughing, "you are a stubborn girl, and I guess you come honestly by that attribute. If you will wipe your hands, I will let you have what I intended to give you."

She turned to the towel-rack and dried her hands in the method approved by the Pharisees, who washed and wiped "to the elbow." Then she came and stood before him. He took a package of papers from his pocket, selected one, and handed it to her.

"That is for you," he said.

She turned it over curiously.

"May I look at it?" she asked.

"Certainly; read it."

Dotty opened it and glanced at its contents. It was a long document, couched in legal phraseology which she only half understood; but she did understand enough to know that she was made richer by that instrument than she had ever thought to be.

The tears sprang to her eyes, and falling on her knees she seized the stranger's hand and kissed it again and again. A look of calm content came over Mr. Jackson's face as he smoothed the hair about her forehead with the other hand, and said : —

“There, there, — don't cry !”

“But who are you that does such wonderful things ?” she asked appealingly.

He smiled curiously down at her, and said :

“No matter, dear ; I am one whose work is almost done.”

She looked at him in wonder and awe as she rose to her feet.

“And now,” said he, “I wish you would take this to your father, — and this to your mother. Then by the time you get your cloak on, Mr. Dewstowe will be ready for his ride, — unless, indeed, he and Ozro have fought and killed each other already.”

“Oh, no fear of that !” Dotty answered brightly.

“Well, perhaps not ; but don't be too sure. Run away now !”

She stooped quickly and kissed him, — then fled while her cheeks flushed a burning red.

“I could n't help it !” she said to herself as

she went along the porch. "And I'm sure he deserved it. Anybody would kiss a man as good as he is."

Dotty gave her father a bulky document, "with Mr. Jackson's compliments," and took a small sealed note to her mother, who was sitting by the window with the great family Bible open on her knee. Dotty put the paper she had herself received in her pocket, drew on her wraps, and when Dewstowe and the traveller drove to the porch with the latter's horse fastened to the sleigh, she was ready to start. Ozro seemed more serious than usual as he helped her to her seat, tucked the robes about her, and then turning quickly away entered the house. The landlord came out upon the porch as they drove off, looking dazed and flurried.

The landlady having opened the letter her daughter had brought, read these words:—

"Luke xv. 24."

Turning to the book upon her knee she found the place indicated, and read:—

"For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry."

The snow sparkled in the chill sunshine. The bells jingled merrily. Dotty's red hood

disappeared. The landlady caught a glimpse of Ozro's set face as he crossed the porch, and then her husband's stalwart form came into the field of vision, walking hastily and swinging his arms nervously. In one hand he held a large closely-written sheet bearing a seal of red wafer.

A MISSION OF MERCY.

THE horses dragged slowly up the hill on which the Inn stood when, three hours later, Dewstowe and Dotty returned from their "mission of mercy," as she persisted in calling the trip they had taken. They had driven the traveller several miles on his way along the Lake road, and had left him with a warm sense of Christmas kindness about his heart, to pursue his toilsome and anxious journey. Returning, they had scattered invitations right and left for the merry-making to be given that night at the Inn. The chill midwinter sun was near meridian, but the air was full of icy particles that glittered in its light as the journey drew near its end. The bays were flecked with sparkling rime that turned their dark "points" into silver. Terrets and buckles were covered with white frost-enamel. Dewstowe whipped his fingers vigorously from time to time. The horses loitered along the half-beaten track, swinging their heads from side to side, and throwing out

puffs of white vapor from their red nostrils while they turned and looked backward now and then, as if inquiring the cause of their master's unusual indulgence. It was not a difficult question for one able to comprehend human nature to determine. J. Dewstowe, Esq., had forgotten even the horses of which he was so proud, and after whose comfort he usually looked with such unfailing care. Despite their chill surroundings he was talking very earnestly, and Dotty was listening with a face for whose blooming color even the winter wind could not be held entirely answerable. There was a ring in the voice of this merchant-prince of the road which avouched the sincerity of his words. We will not play the eavesdropper and tell what they were. It was the old, old story, which we are told has gone out of date in these days of self-conscious shame-facedness, so that no maiden expects a suitor to frame an honest tale of love or ask her benison on his manly aspiration. Dewstowe was a brave man and an honest lover. Though he had said that there was no sentiment in his suit, the remark was far from being literally true. He was no sniveller, and did not whine or maunder about in any sort of lovesick self-dissection. What he had to say he said plainly

and earnestly, yet withal in a tone of self-depreciation and with a feeling of humility which only love can bring, and which even it brings only to the heart of an honest man. He had told his story and Dotty had given her answer when they arrived at the foot of the slope that led up to the Inn. There were tears on her lashes. His lips were set close, but that could not hide the quiver about their edges. He had hardly hoped for success, but he could not face rejection with entire composure.

"I am very sorry, Mr. Dewstowe," said Dotty in trembling tones, but with frank confidence, "for I like you better than any man I ever saw, except Ozro. I thought at one time I might come to like you even better still, but I found it was not so. I am sorry you did not ask me last night, for I should have given you the same answer then as now."

"I am sure you would," he replied. "You really gave me my answer weeks ago. I read it in your eyes the night Ozro had his fight with the dog; but I had gone so far that you were in fairness entitled to have me ask you for your love, even if I could not hope to gain it. Of course I did not know but there might be a chance, and did not feel like throwing it away.

I am no hero, you know, and would have taken you on any terms — unless," he added thoughtfully, "you really felt you could never be happy with me.

"I don't blame you, however, and did n't want to take any unfair advantage. Ozro is a good fellow, who will make his way in the world, — there is no doubt of that. He is n't what we call a pushing man, but he's got that in him which pays better for another man to push than anything else. The fact is there ain't anything in the world that it pays so well to work as just that kind of brain which can devise a way of making a new thing cheaper and better than an old one, or putting up a machine that will enable one man to do two men's work. The world is just beginning to learn the money there is in brains, — especially of that sort.

"I would n't take any mean advantage, and tell you of Ozro's bad luck, or try to scare you with the idea that he can't make a living. It is true he has been unfortunate with the machines he has invented, but it would n't have been fair to have told you of it before you had given me an answer. I only do it now to say that it is n't anything to be discouraged about. It was n't his fault, but another's luck. Don't let

him get down-hearted. That's the only danger. If he should get the notion that your desire is beyond his ability to bestow, or that you would be happier without him, then look out. I don't say he would make way with himself, remember, but I do believe he'd take himself off. He ain't exactly touchy, but he's high-strung, and may imagine things that don't exist at all. That's the way with that sort of people, and I suppose it makes them both better and worse than others. When he tells you of the failure of his hopes, don't let him think it could make any sort of difference with you."

"It certainly could not now," Dotty answered, thinking of the Christmas present in her pocket.

"I don't suppose it ever would," Dewstowe responded almost bitterly. "I don't think you ever knew how much you thought of him, but I ought to have seen it. When he tells you what has happened, be sure you make light of it."

"He has already told me."

"And you —?"

"I have had no chance to speak with him since."

Then Dotty went on and told with a touch of pride in her voice of the manly letter she had received.

"So you wore his colors this morning, and signalled your love over my poor head at breakfast!"

"Oh, no, I have not worn the jewels at all."

"Why not?"

"I — I don't know."

Dewstowe stopped his horses and looked at her sternly.

"Yes, you do. You wanted to tease him!"

"No, indeed! But I — I thought it would be right to let him see that — that — it did n't make any difference!"

"You wished him to know that you had refused me?"

"No, but that my love did not depend on his success."

"Your motive was a good one, no doubt," said Dewstowe, hesitatingly, as he started the horses up the hill; "but I am afraid it was a bad thing to do. That is what made him so savage when we were hitching up. He thought you had already refused him. Gad! I know now how he felt! No, I don't — I only guess; for I tell you what, Dotty, I don't think I ever loved you as he does. I don't believe I *could* — there! And now I'm afraid —!"

He chirruped to his horses and drove briskly up the hill.

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Dotty, thinking of the deed in her pocket and the destruction of all her pretty castles in the air. She had felt so kind and tender towards every one when they drove away, and now at their return it seemed as if all the brightness had gone out of life.

The frost particles had grown into fine flakes; the sun shone yellow and dim through the thickened air; the lake with its burden of white ice, with dark spots intervening where the angry waters had refused to yield to the frozen fetters of winter, had disappeared from sight, and the hush in the air imported a storm of unusual severity. It was one of those sudden changes which are frequent enough in that region, but it struck a chill to Dotty's heart as she alighted, ran up the steps, and went at once in search of Ozro.

Dewstowe stood upon the porch, whipping his hands and stamping his numbed feet, awaiting her return.

She came presently, and looked up at him with a blanched face as she said:—

"He is not here!"

Their eyes told each other's thoughts.

"Gone anywhere?"

"Nobody knows; nobody has—seen him!"

"Tell Jackson," said Dewstowe, with instant decision. "Search the house quickly but quietly. I will look about the barn. The Inn needs no more ghosts," he muttered to himself as he sprang into the sleigh and drove across the road. "Ozro's a good fellow, — a splendid fellow," he added heartily, "but he needs a gardeen. It's in the blood, I guess."

BLOTTED OUT.

“MY son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.” Over and over again the woman repeated the words in a harsh subvocal monotone, passing her worn finger back and forth along the lines that her eyes followed unconsciously. Her son!—could it be? She did not doubt; yet the idea appalled her. Was this seemingly “sanctified” stranger her son? She did not question his sincerity; she did not doubt his religious fervor. She only questioned whether one with blood-stained hands *could* become entirely “sanctified.” She used the term in the sense in which it is employed by the sect to which she belonged. She shuddered at the thought. Her son was found; the dead was alive! He had repented of his sin; he had come to make atonement! This was the reason he had taken such interest in Ozro. He wished to do good to those whom he had injured,—to repair the evil he had wrought. Her prayers had been answered more fully than she had ever

dreamed they would be. Daily, almost hourly, she had prayed, — not that she might see his face, not for his prosperity, but that he might see his sin. And now, behold, what she had not sought had been added to the thing for which she had ceaselessly petitioned, — she saw him prosperous, peaceful, penitent.

“My son was dead and is alive again ; he was lost and is found.”

Her trembling lips repeated the text, and her withered hands drew the coarse linen handkerchief from the place where it always hung at her side, — its end folded beneath the band of her apron, — and wiped away the tears that were coursing silently down her faded cheeks. Having restored it to its place, she reached out and took her snuff-box from the window-sill, tapped the cover sharply, turned it gently off, and slipped it deftly beneath the box which she held in her left hand, while with her right she took a pinch of the pungent impalpable powder. She applied this to her nostrils meditatively, restored the cover, and returned the box to its place just as her husband entered the room. She was so startled by his appearance that a bit of the snuff dropped on the white page upon her lap. She brushed it carefully off while

recovering her composure. She noticed that it left a stain upon the text: "My son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is —"

The dark maccoboy clung to the rough hand-made paper of the book and blotted out the last word.

"Found!" she repeated to herself. "He is found! It is blotted out of the book, but I know it by heart. It is God's word. He wrote it, and it cannot be rubbed out."

Nevertheless the blot troubled her. She lifted the great book in both hands, and tried to blow the clinging dust away; but still the blot remained. Her husband came toward her. She trembled as she laid the closed book upon her lap, and folded her hands upon it, with her handkerchief in one of them. It comported well with herself and her surroundings; she had spun the coarse linen threads and woven the peculiar diamond mesh herself.

"I had to come and tell ye, Lucy," said the landlord, apologetically, — it was almost eighteen years since he had been in his wife's apartment, and he felt strangely diffident as he approached her, — "I had to come and show ye this."

He held out the released mortgage as he spoke. She took it absently.

"Won't ye set down?" she said, not looking up.

"Can't," he responded awkwardly, as he took hold of the back of a chair, turned it around, and leaned upon it. "Got to go and see Jackson. He did it, ye know. Good of him, was n't it? What do you suppose made him do it?"

She shook her head, but her lips repeated, —

"My son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."

The last words were spoken more distinctly than the rest. The landlord heard, but did not understand.

"Heh?" he inquired, turning his head upon one side; "so much found? I should think it was—'found in the dishwater,' as they say. Won't ye go and tell him ye're obliged?"

She shook her head; he saw tears in her eyes.

"Could n't do it? Well, 't would be hard; an' he a stranger too. I'll tell him how ye feel."

He spoke very tenderly, and went out carefully, as one moves about in a sick-room, as if anxious not to disturb her emotion.

The landlord found Mr. Jackson sitting by a table covered with papers. He was writing

busily, and paid little attention to the effusive thanks of his host until he spoke of the landlady's gratitude.

"Wanted to come and thank ye, but could n't, sir," he exclaimed. "Ye know, Mr. Jackson, there's some things one can't do, especially with strangers."

A grave smile stole across the face of his listener. The landlord wondered what it meant. Somehow there was always something about his strange guest that puzzled and confused him. Whether it was his austerity of life or gravity of manner, he could not tell. At all events, it cut short his effusiveness, and he went back to the public-room much less elated than when he left it. The mortgage was released to his wife. The Inn was hers without lien or incumbrance. They need not be afraid of being turned out of doors in their old age now. So he was saying to himself when he met Ozro upon the porch.

"I wonder if she'll give it to him now," he thought. "Just like her; thinks probably I ought to have used that money to keep it from spilin'. So I ought. An' then the trinkets! Wonder if Jack did take 'em. I don't believe it; never did. But if he did n't, who could have got 'em? Lucy swore she see'd 'em. Other

folks see'd 'em too. Could n't have been anybody in the room after Jack left. Wonder if she gave 'em to him. It's queer what become of 'em, that's a fact. I b'lieve I'll go up into the room and look. I hain't been in it in a long time, and seems somehow as if I might learn something about the matter if I went there now."

He crossed the public-room, climbed the stairs, and entered what had so long been to him a chamber of horrors. He looked around timidly, as if recalling the scene of eighteen years before. He crossed softly to where the bed had stood ; looked out of the window with a shudder ; turned from his way as he went back toward the fireplace, as if the dead woman were still sitting in his path. He stood upon the hearth and looked searchingly about the room. Why would it not yield up its mysteries ? His eye fell upon Ozro's machines : he had never seen them, and had paid little heed to the conversation about them. He now sat down and examined them closely. He was not much of a mechanician, but he knew enough of machinery to appreciate the operation of the models and admire their ingenuity.

"The creetur certainly has got good idees," he said to himself, "and is handy with tools

too, considerin'. He ain't sech a bad fellow nuther, if it had n't always seemed as if he was a sort of standin' reproach for what I've done, or somebody thinks I've done. I hain't really anything ag'in him, and he has been uncommon good to look after things about the Inn, — there ain't no denyin' that. But 'tain't nateral for a man to take to one that's bein' thrown up to him all the time, directly or indirectly, no matter how good he is."

A slight noise disturbed his reverie, and looking around he sat frozen to the marrow by the sight that met his gaze. The floor from the side of the chimney to the wall had fallen away, and a dark cavity yawned in its place. As he looked, a gray head rose above the edge, a worn wrinkled hand grasped the side, a pale face and white kerchief came out of the depths, and the mistress of Button's Inn clambered up on her knees and slowly and cautiously rose to her feet. With noiseless steps she crossed the room, carefully avoiding the place where the bed had stood, examined the wall with her fingers, stole along to the window and looked out.

Lonny Button shivered in his chair with horror. The chill winter sun was near the meridian, but he knew that he was looking at the ghost of

the Inn. He remembered the face that peered out of the window that terrible night when he had glanced at it along his rifle barrel, and pulled the trigger with such desperate intent. He could just see in the ceiling above his wife's head the path of the silver bullet. The cold sweat burst out on his brow as he thought what would have been the result had his aim been true. He rose from his chair and tottered toward her.

"Lucy!" he called in a strained whisper.

She turned and looked at him, but did not speak. Her eyes seemed glassy and unnatural; he was sure they did not see at all. She shrank quickly back from the window as he spoke, put her fingers in her ears, and crouched down on the floor. Before he could think what this strange pantomime might mean, his ears were assailed with the shrieks he had never forgotten, and a terror greater than he had ever known before compelled him to turn and flee down the narrow stairs. As he glanced back from the landing, he saw the crouching figure flit across the room and disappear in the gloom beside the chimney. But he could not stay his terrified steps. Others had heard the shrieks, and came rushing up the stairs. Upon them the landlord fell like an avalanche, and all were borne back-

ward upon the floor of the public-room. The landlord was picked up half insensible. In the midst of the confusion the stranger entered. By some accident his hat was off. The strip of white hair that crossed his crown shone uncannily among his jetty locks. His eyes burned brightly, and his sallow cheeks were strangely flushed. He turned to the little corner cupboard beside the chimney, opened it familiarly, and pouring out a glass of spirits gave it to the moaning, trembling landlord.

When they had placed the shivering man in his great armchair, the stranger went up the stairs into the room above. Others followed. The winter sky sent its chill light into every corner, but nothing was to be seen. The landlord, questioned as to what he had encountered, only shook his head and moaned. The ghost had undoubtedly appeared again, and this time in broad daylight.

When Dotty returned, she found her mother lying in troubled sleep upon the bed. In reply to her anxious inquiry for Ozro, the dazed woman would only repeat, as she moved her head from side to side, —

“Blotted out, Dotty! blotted out, — out of the Book of Life!”

A SUDDEN START.

IT was with no feeling of coquettishness that Dotty had failed to wear the jewels Ozro had sent as a token of his love. She had long ceased to entertain the idea of accepting Mr. Dewstowe, and indeed felt somewhat humiliated at the position in which she found herself. She had undoubtedly encouraged his suit, and at one time had — so at least she thought — made up her mind to accept him. The absurd arrangement which had put off until Christmas the final determination of her preference, though proposed by Ozro to prevent a too hasty decision in his rival's favor, had brought with it very embarrassing consequences. She could not say that anything had occurred in the mean time to diminish her regard for the magnate of the road. Indeed, all that she had come to know of him had enhanced her esteem, especially his recognition and appreciation of Ozro's merits. To tell the truth, the fact that Mr. Dewstowe was willing to risk money on Ozro's inventions had set the seal to her determination

in favor of his rival. She would have admired her old playmate's ingenuity, but might have hesitated both to encumber his future and to intrust him with so difficult a task as the redemption of the fortunes of the Button family, had not his work received the prompt indorsement of the practical and successful merchant. That settled the whole matter. She did not need this to show her that she loved Ozro, or to convince her of his merits, but it served to satisfy her that her love would be no serious incumbrance to him. It mattered not in the least that his first invention had proved a failure. The fact that it had commanded the instant approval of a cautious, practical man of affairs like Mr. Dewstowe, so that he was willing to venture a thousand dollars on its success, was enough. To have come so near success was a sufficient proof of the power to succeed. After that moment she had not hesitated ; her mind was fully made up. If at any time Ozro had asked—if he had even given her an opportunity—she would gladly have anticipated the decision and saved herself the embarrassment of Dewstowe's presence at this time.

As affairs were, however, the problem which confronted her was of a twofold character. What

should she say to Dewstowe? How excuse the inconsistency of her conduct, and make him understand that there was neither any purpose on her part to trifle with his feelings or slight his love, — that she had encouraged his advances with the expectation of granting his suit, but had been compelled by overmastering love to reject him. This task was made all the more difficult by the stranger's bounty. She saw that not one alone, but both of her lovers were likely to attribute to her a mercenary motive. She was very far from being sordid, but the wants of her parents seemed so burdensome that she had dreaded to impose them on Ozro. Her purpose had been not to *gratify* herself, but to *sacrifice* herself. Now she feared that Ozro would attribute his acceptance to her good fortune, and Dewstowe believe that the same accident led to his rejection. She had hoped to inform Ozro of the reason why she did not wear at breakfast the trinkets he had sent her, but the exciting events of the morning interfered, and she saw as she drove away with Dewstowe that Ozro had misconstrued her conduct. She was sorry to have given him pain, and yet an irresistible tendency to mischief induced her to add to his dejection by the gayety with which she set off with his rival.

All this was unknown to Ozro. He had never before permitted himself seriously to doubt the result of his suit. Though he had humbly declared that he would abide her decision, he had not once imagined that it might be adverse to him. His confidence in his own ability was on a par with his trust in her love. He understood Dotty's anxiety as to her parents, and would not have felt greatly surprised had she persisted in her idea of sacrificing herself for them had affairs remained as they were when he had stipulated for delay. Although his first efforts had miscarried, he thought that he had shown ability enough to remove her doubt as to his success. He had seen her go off with his rival the day before, never doubting that the question to be determined on the morrow would be practically decided before their return. He did not doubt therefore that Dotty would wear the jewels he had sent her, and had scanned her attire in the confident hope of discovering them when they met at breakfast. The fact that she did not, overwhelmed him with consternation. This was increased by the character of the letter he received, and he did not recover his equanimity until some time after her departure with Dewstowe and the traveller. Then for the first time distrust

of her love entered his mind. To say he was jealous would be incorrect: he was surprised, hurt, angry. He did not believe she preferred his rival, but thought she did prefer his rival's money. He recalled her mother's declaration, "She loves his horses, his fine clothes, his money!" She was not sacrificing herself, — there was no longer any question of that, — she was selling herself.

So Ozro said to himself as he listened to their laughter as they drove away. Then he went to his work-room and read again the letter he had received, pondering its words carefully. When he concluded, his face had grown stern. He would not grace her triumph. When she returned she should find that he had made good his words: he would leave the Inn without delay. Then he remembered his engagement with the stranger. He went into his own room and made up a small bundle, — very small, he thought, as he put it in the pocket of the long-skirted overcoat that hung across his arm. He would not take much from the Inn. The package of bills — now worthless — which the landlord had picked up at his dead mother's side, and the little red morocco-covered Bible in which she had written his name were among the few articles he retained. They re-

mindcd him of her, — the dear, dead mother whose fate was so sad and mysterious, but whose nature had been so sweet. He sometimes thought he could remember her. He went back into the room where she had died, and knelt by the low rocker in which she used to sit. It had never been removed from the room, and no one but he had occupied it since. He called it his mother's chair. He wished he could take it with him. When he rose from his knees there were tears in his eyes, and his look was less stern, but none the less resolute. He thought of his mother's grave — her last resting-place upon the bleak edge of the cliff — as he descended to the stranger's room. He was grateful to the hemlocks that bent over it protectingly. He would go and see it again. It seemed like bidding his mother farewell, — so closely are individuals linked with inanimate objects by association. When he turned his footsteps from the Inn he well knew it would be never to return.

Ozro knocked at the stranger's door, and was bidden to enter. Its occupant was writing busily at a little table drawn in front of the fireplace, in the corner of which he sat. The table was covered with papers, while others were to be

seen in his portmanteau which lay open beside him.

"You wished to see me, I think?" Ozro explained, as he closed the door and stood with his cap and comforter in his hand and overcoat upon his arm.

"Sit down," said the stranger, nodding toward a chair at the other side of the fireplace.

"Really, Mr. Jackson," said Ozro, apologetically, "I — I have not time to stay."

The stranger looked up at him and saw that he was wearing his best clothes, — mostly homespun, but newer and neater than he usually wore.

"Going away?" he asked.

"That is my intention," the young man replied stiffly.

"Where?"

"I have not yet determined," Ozro answered with assumed carelessness.

"Is n't it rather unusual for a man to be in such a hurry to set out on a journey of which he does not know the end?" asked the stranger, with a smile. The broad white hat was pushed a little way back from the forehead; the full black beard made a fitting frame for the face, which though dark and sallow had in it no little nobility and power.

"I don't know," answered Ozro in some confusion.

"I do not wish to hinder you, young man," said the other, severely. "If you are in haste I have no right to detain you; but let me give you a word of advice before you start. Our paths may not cross again, and I may have no other opportunity. Have you time to hear it?"

"Certainly."

"It is this: don't start out on a journey with a lie in your mouth. It is apt to bring bad luck." There was a fire in the stranger's eye which Ozro had seldom noted before.

"I did not mean —" he stammered.

"You did not mean to tell the truth," said the other. "That is all there is of it. You did not wish me to know that you were about to set off on a rash and foolish journey, and so said you had not time to speak with me. Do not start that way in life. If you do not wish to reveal your purposes, either say so explicitly or say nothing at all."

Ozro bowed in acknowledgment of the justice of this criticism.

"Now, young man," said the stranger, speaking with grave sarcasm, taking out a massive silver watch which hung by a black ribbon at

his fob, — an English chronometer whose possession had been one of the indications of abundant wealth on which Ozro had based the estimate of his means, — “Now, young man, I do want a little of your valuable time. I am willing to pay you for it if you think you cannot give it; but I hoped my request would be sufficient.”

“I will stay,” said Ozro, composedly depositing his overcoat upon a chair, and seating himself in the corner opposite, holding his cap in his hand, and taking no notice of the irony in the other’s tone.

“So you were not really in haste?”

“Enough to justify my words, but not enough to cause you any disappointment.”

“You intended to leave the Inn?”

Ozro nodded.

“I do not wish to seem inquisitive, but may I ask why?”

The young man did not answer. He had never spoken of his love to any one but Dotty, save when compelled by Dewstowe’s frank admissions; and it seemed a sort of profanation to admit another to the secrets of his heart.

“I see,” said the other, after a moment’s thought. “I don’t know as I blame you. Ap-

pearances are against her, — there's no denying that. But be careful, young man. Love should be very patient. Remember that doubt was your father's besetting sin."

There was a solemn tenderness in the stranger's tone. Ozro gazed at him in surprise, amounting almost to terror.

"My father!" he ejaculated.

"Yes, your father. His jealous suspicion of the woman he loved even to desperation destroyed two lives and wrecked a third. Do not let your folly perpetuate his fault."

Ozro sat absently turning his cap over and over in his hands.

"Did you know — my — mother?" he asked, without looking up.

The stranger started.

"Yes."

"And was she —?"

"She was everything a woman ought to be," interrupted the other, hastily and emphatically.

"And — my father?" glancing shyly toward the man he interrogated.

"I knew little of him," said the stranger, calmly. "He was no doubt a good man. He could love, but could not trust; or rather did not understand that love must be free — that it

will serve with an abjectness a slave never knew, but will not submit to tyranny."

"And my father — ?"

"Demanded obedience."

"And my mother — ?"

"Do not speak of her!" exclaimed the stranger, excitedly, rising and pacing back and forth across the narrow room.

"You — you?" queried the young man, tremulously, rising and peering into the face of the elder.

"I loved her, God knows! And I love her still!" said the stranger, raising his tearful eyes and clasping his hands as he spoke.

"And you are — ?" said Ozro, taking a step toward him.

The stranger looked at him, read the thought his tongue refused to utter, shook his head sadly, and said humbly, —

"I *am* Abner Jackson; I *was* Jack Button."

Ozro gazed at him in amazement not unmingled with horror. The stranger stood with eyes cast down and hands clasped before him, as if waiting for the other to speak.

"Yet they say you killed her!" exclaimed Ozro, hoarsely, after a time.

"I was the cause of her death," was the reply,

in a tone of stern self-accusation. Still he did not lift his eyes.

"But you did not intend it ; you did not mean to do her harm ?"

The man was Dotty's brother ; and despite the fact that she seemed to have preferred Dewstowe, he could not think of her brother as a criminal.

"I would have died to save her a moment's sorrow."

"Then you are not her — her murderer ?" said Ozro, in a tone of relief.

"Not *hers* !" came from the drooping figure, — "not *hers* ! It was the other whom I slew."

"The other !" exclaimed Ozro, drawing back. There was surprise and horror in his voice.

"Yes ; your father !"

"My father ! You — killed — my father ?"

"Even so !" replied the other, in the same quiet tone.

"How ? Why ?" exclaimed the young man, trembling as he felt that he stood at length on the brink of the mystery clouded by so many silent years.

"That is what I wished to tell you," said the elder man, looking up, and speaking with the utmost composure. "But if you have not time

to hear the story, or would prefer to read it, the facts are all in this paper, which has been written over and over again to fit it for your perusal."

"I will hear you," said Ozro, mechanically. His lips were dry, and he could not say more.

The other motioned to him to sit down, resumed his own seat, and mechanically filled one of the long reed-stemmed pipes he habitually used, several of which stood about the fireplace.

"I want to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," he said, when he had lighted it; "and somehow I seem to think clearer when I have a pipe in my mouth. Not that I need to think much about what I'm going to tell you, for there has n't been a day in many a year that I have n't been over it from A to Izzard. Perhaps it's the habit of thinking and not talking that makes it so hard for me to begin, now that I have to do what I have so long thought of doing."

He smoked awhile in silence, and then began his narrative.

YESTERDAY'S WOE.

“ I HAD been down to the harbor that day, — eighteen years ago yesterday. It seems almost an eternity to me now ; but that’s all it is. I had met your mother here, and fallen madly in love with her. She did not know it, though everybody else did. Every day my love grew more and more desperate. I knew she did not care for me, and had little hope that she ever would. She was not one of my kind, — not as I was then. I have seen the time since when I have thought she would not have been altogether ashamed of the love or unobservant of the partiality of such an one as I had become. But that is neither here nor there, — just a vain man’s fancy. I knew nothing of her relations with her husband, — what he was like, or whether she really cared for him. Somehow I came to the conclusion that he had treated her unjustly ; and that while she respected scrupulously the legal tie that bound them together, she had very little affection for him.

“ I was a wild young fellow then, though my love for your mother did much to sober me, — for it was a love which, however much of pain it has brought, had no evil in it. To me it was little less than adoration. To her it brought no stain, because she was unconscious of it. The star is not dimmed by the faults of the worshipper. Of course, my companions were not slow to rally me on my well-known devotion to the mysterious lady at the Inn, and naturally enough I did not hesitate to boast of the love I could not deny nor conceal. On that day the jests made at my expense in the bar-room of the tavern where the stages stopped were both numerous and unmistakable. To all of them I answered, giving such reasons as I might for the infatuation they chose to ascribe to me.

“ Among the passengers by the stage of the day before from the East was one who seemed to take great interest in our banter. He inquired the name of the woman to whom reference was made ; how long she had been at the Inn ; and how long it had been since I returned. These questions were in the main answered by my companions, sometimes by myself. When he asked in regard to her husband, I answered harshly, no doubt. I had an infinite contempt as well as a

wild unreasoning hate for the man who had evidently caused her grief. I did not know that I was jealous, though no doubt I was ; love is very unreasonable. I had formed a picture in my own mind of the man I hated. This strong, clean-shaven, blue-eyed gentleman, of suave though somewhat severe manner, did not at all fill the requirements of my fancy. I did not dream that he had any special interest in the matter until, just as the stage was about to start in this direction, he brought me a letter addressed to your mother, and asked me to deliver it into her hands. Even then my suspicion was but a vague one.

“ ‘ Who are you ? ’ I asked.

“ ‘ Oh, you need not fear a rival,’ he answered, with a polite sneer. ‘ I once knew this lady’s husband, and the letter contains news that will no doubt be very interesting to her. If possible, I would like you to deliver it immediately on the arrival of the stage.’

“ I accepted the commission ; and all the way up the hill the conviction grew stronger in my mind that this cold, polished man was the husband who had once cast her off, and had come intending to set up anew his marital claim, but had been deterred by the jests of the loungers at the tavern. I did not doubt that the letter I bore

was an angry one, probably a final renunciation. The thought gave me a most exultant feeling. Somehow it seemed to bring her nearer to me, to know that she was separated irrevocably from him. Though some of the jests had pointed unequivocally to my attachment for her, no word had been breathed reflecting on her good name. My associates knew better than to venture to such length ; it would have cost any man his life to have hinted anything to her discredit in my hearing. The worst intimation was that we might be married whenever the law made it feasible. Perhaps I even asserted that it was the law that stood between us rather than the husband. If I did, it was a sin which I have grievously repented.

“When we reached the Inn, and I saw your mother standing on the threshold waiting for the man she loved despite his injustice and his coldness, looking past me without a hint of recognition in the eyes aglow with expectation, — then first I recognized the fact that I was nothing to her, and never could be. She was seeking her husband, — a husband she had once loved, had never forgotten, and stood ready to forgive for all his harshness and suspicion.

“Then I knew that I had committed a great wrong, and was irresistibly impelled to attempt

its reparation. I made haste to tell her all that had occurred. You have heard the story,—how I went to her room, and was with her I know not how long. You have no doubt seen the letter which I brought. If I had doubted her love for her husband before, I never did afterward. She forgot my presence ; I was as nothing to her,—a servant, a creature, one from whom it was unnecessary even to hide her woe.

“When she had somewhat exhausted her surprise and grief, not unmixed with anger, I told her the cause of the language he had used. I made a clean breast of it,—confessed my love, and showed her how a jealous man might have been stung by what he heard. She did not regard me enough to pity or even to despise me ; her thought was all of him,—the one man whom she had ever loved. I can say truthfully that I took my punishment bravely. I felt that I had deserved it, and did not shrink.

“Her agony, however, was more than I could bear. I remembered to have heard her husband say that he should go westward on the stage that night. I proposed to return at once, acknowledge my fault, and bring him back with me. I shall never forget the light that came into her eyes when I made this offer. She was ready

to pardon my offence if I would perform this penance. I believe she would even have loved me a little afterward if I could but have given her this great joy. It hurt me to find myself thus absolutely ignored, — to think that I was but as dust beneath her feet, while her whole being palpitated with joy at the thought of meeting him who I felt sure had done her wrong. She gave me her hand in thanks. I kissed it. I had never dreamed of kissing any hand before; but I would have kissed a shoe if it had been hers.

“Love is a strange thing,” said the stranger — who was no longer a stranger — meditatively. “It takes hold of all sorts of lives; and the curious thing about it is that it transforms them all. Some it makes better, and some it makes worse; but it fires, exalts, and intensifies all alike. Every one that loves lives a romance. Love may be set in gold or in brass, be clad in purple or homespun, but it is the same universal transforming influence. It may lead to heaven or hell, but no man is strong enough to resist its potency. You never saw the process of making steel, did you? Just common soft iron — rusty and shapeless and mean perhaps — is heated and hammered and rolled. Nothing else is added, no

new ingredient intermixed. From cherry redness to a glaring white, the color wavers back and forth. Now the rollers crush it, the hammers mangle and bruise, the blue flames redden again; and then the shaping rolls give it form, and the pure, keen-tempered steel is formed. If the iron was not good at the outset, the steel may be worthless; then it is good for nothing, even as iron. So it is with love. It adds nothing to the life it touches, but brings out the temper. It may beat and crush and tear and rend; but if the nature is worth refining, it will 'take a temper' or 'hold an edge,' as the workmen say, — it will be stronger afterward than it was before. If not, it will just blister and scale and burn into worthlessness. I loved your mother. I had no right to love her, and no warrant for my presumption; but all there is in my life worth considering has come from that love, — even what I came here to do is the result of it. It's been a hard process; but I think — I really do think — a little keen-edged steel has come out of it. And I suppose that's the only way such poor stuff could have been tempered.

"As soon as I had kissed her hand I started. The hand was soft and fair! Its touch added delirium to my adoration! My heart was full

of hate for any one who could cause pain to a being so divinely fair. She had read me her husband's letter. I think she did it half-unconsciously, in that maze of grief, anger, and surprise that followed its perusal. She had no idea of giving me her confidence, but her heart was too sore to hide its sorrow. Every word of it was burned into my brain. It was hard, cruel, mean, but heated white by the fire of his passion. I felt that. I said in my heart, this man loves this woman, and yet tortures her as no agent of the Inquisition ever dreamed of torturing its victims. I felt it all, but did not say it,—did not think it, in fact; and it was not till years after that I knew that I had even perceived it at all.

“ I went away,—her words, her looks, her tones in my heart, her tears feeding my hate. I will conceal nothing. I sought your father, not to do him harm, but still less to do him a favor. I had said I would bring him back, and I intended to perform my promise. If he would not come otherwise, I would bring him by force. If he neglected or abused in any way the love of the woman of whose meanest thought he was unworthy, he should answer to me. I had no good wishes for him. I went to bring him because it would make her happy. I wanted him

to live for her sake. I wished he had never lived ; but it did not occur to me that his death could be to my advantage, — not till afterward, at least.

“When I proposed going she had, after her first burst of gratitude, objected because of the storm. It was a bad night, but not so bad then as it grew toward morning. It was the first heavy snow of the season, and had nothing to build on. It fell straight down, thick and feathery but still, upon the bare frozen ground, and lay soft and cushioning where it fell. You know what it was like ?”

Ozro nodded in the affirmative, and the other went on.

“When she spoke of the storm she went to the window and peered out. I followed her, seeking to remove an objection it required little argument to overcome. The air was full of great white flakes, falling straight downward except for the wave-like motion which the still air gave to the flat feathery forms. They crossed and recrossed each other's paths, forming an ever-moving curtain that hid all that lay beyond. The light from the window shone out among them as we stood there side by side, our shadows falling on the feathery screen. I showed her

that the storm, though heavy, was not severe ; it would make the walking difficult, but that was nothing for me.

“ Five minutes afterward I was on my way. As I looked up at the window I saw her framed in the yellowish glare that shone through the falling flakes. While I had been in the room you had been very restless. Her excitement, no doubt, communicated itself to you. When I looked back she was holding you in her arms. I supposed she was showing you the snow. I have wondered since if she meant it for a final appeal to my manhood, — if she wished me to tell the husband I sought of the tableau I had seen in the window.

“ I pushed on as fast as I could. I wore a fur-cap and a close-buttoned roundabout, or coatee, as the garment was then called. I did not wish to be encumbered with anything more. Pretty soon I began to note fresh tracks in the snow. You know the sort of dim light that comes filtering down through such a storm. I suspect that the moon must have been near the full, but I could not see it. I wondered who could be abroad on such a night, and on what errand he was bound. I knew this traveller was a strong man, of good stature, for the track was straight,

and the stride even greater than my own. The tracks missed the road sometimes, but there was never any indecision about them ; they went always straight back to the half-obliterated track the stage had made.

“ I soon knew by their greater freshness that I was gaining on the man in front. He did not seem to be in any great haste, while I was doing my best ; besides, I knew every foot of the way. At length I came to where the old road skirts the edge of the ‘ Gulf.’ The pines stood thick along it then, and made the gloom in their shadow intense. I noticed that it was so still that the wind made no sound among their branches. The bank was not twenty yards from the track, and I began to fear that the man ahead of me might miss his way and fall over the precipice. As this fear increased, I shouted in hope of attracting his attention. A few pines and a fringe of stunted hemlocks grew along the edge. A voice answered my shout almost at my elbow ; the speaker could not have been five steps from the edge of the precipice.

“ ‘ Hold on !’ I called in terror. ‘ My God, man ! you will be over the bank ! Don’t stir ! stand where you are until I reach you !’

"I started toward him. When I had taken a few steps I halted and called again. I thought I had gone directly toward the voice, but now it was at my left, and seemed about as far away as before. I could see nothing, for the falling snow hid everything three steps away. I could hear nothing either, for the snow muffled all sounds. I knew a man was within ten steps of me, and yet, though there was a dim murky light just about me, I felt as much alone as if in the middle of the ocean.

"'Who is it?' I called.

"'Who are you?' came the response, in a voice I seemed to know but could not recognize.

"I answered, giving my name, and started toward him again. When next I called he was on my right, but nearer, — nearer too to the edge of the precipice, I thought. It seemed that he must have moved in the interval. I begged him to stand still, and started toward him again, going carefully, for I found myself by this time among the low hemlocks which I knew skirted the bank. I had gone but a few steps when I felt myself seized from behind. One word was whispered, — hissed into my ear, and I found myself borne toward the edge of the shelving bank! That one word told me every-

thing. I saw my situation and knew my antagonist in a flash. It was your father !”

The man laid aside his pipe, and bowed his head submissively before the son who sat an arm's length away. For a moment neither spoke. Ozro could hear the labored breathing of his companion on the other side of the fireplace. The left hand on which he leaned, the elbow resting on his knee, concealed his face.

“I tried to explain,—to tell him the truth,” at length came brokenly from the lips of the bowed figure. “There was not much chance; he would not listen. He had seen us at the window,—your mother and me. He was a strong man, taller than I and older, but in his prime,—forty, I should say, or thereabout. I was a strong man too,—unusually strong. In a hand-to-hand tussle I had then few equals; but I had never encountered so desperate an antagonist. I soon realized my danger. It was to be a fight for life, on my part at least. He sought only to force me over the cliff, without seeking to save himself. I do not think he wished to do so; in fact, I think he was looking for the edge, intending to throw himself over, when I called to him. Instinctively I had caught a sapling with my right hand at the instant of his attack.

The impulse whirled me around, still clinging to the tree, and I felt the ground sloping toward the edge. I threw myself down, and clung for dear life to the swaying, creaking, slippery bush,—for it was hardly more than a bush. Fortunately it was a hemlock, and well rooted. It bent and twisted, but did not give way. My antagonist was on top when we fell, and began at once to strive to break my hold. His grasp upon my wrist was like iron. I did not believe he could force me to let go; but I worked my left hand up, and got another grip on the sapling. I was lying face down, he sitting astride my loins. There was no time to speak, and I had little breath to spare if there had been. I could hear him curse me now and then under his breath. Working my legs around, in order to brace myself against his efforts, I felt the trunk of a tree standing on the very edge of the bank. The ground where I lay sloped sharply toward it. Hardly had my foot touched it when I realized what a chance it offered. By great exertion I threw my assailant upward, and instantly clasped the tree with my legs. I was safe then. With the bush held firmly in my hands, and the tree clutched by my knees, I knew that half-a-dozen men could not pull me from the spot.

"Still he struggled. After a time he seemed to realize the hopelessness of the effort. I wrenched my head around and tried to speak. His answer was a blow. Then the blows rained on the back of my head. I drew up my shoulders to save the nape of my neck, and took them as they came. I have wondered since that they did not make me insensible, for they were powerful blows, and it was many a day before I recovered fully from their effects. He evidently expected that result, for presently he tried once more to unloose my hands. I was fast forgetting everything but the instinct of self-preservation. When he found he could not break my grip I heard him say, with a curse, — 'I'll see if something won't start you!'

"Then he loosed one hand from mine, and I heard him feeling about as if searching for a pocket. Somehow I did not realize his purpose until, twisting my head about in the snow in which my face was imbedded, I saw him take his knife from his pocket and open it with his teeth. The act filled me with that rage which the use of unfair means always awakens in an imperilled man. From that instant I was as reckless as he. I not only determined to foil his design, but to take his life. Your mother's wrongs

surged up in my memory, and with the thought a strange, wild, exultant idea that this man was all that stood between us. If only he were out of the way, she might be mine. I did not know where or how he intended to strike ; all I could do was to wait until I discovered his aim, and then avoid the blow if possible. Of course, I did not lie motionless during this time. I heaved and wrenched, but he sat firmly in his place. Seeing his purpose, I tightened the grip of my left hand, and determined to cast loose with my right at the instant he struck, so as to divert his aim. I did so. Strange enough, he struck at my arm. I suppose it did not occur to him to kill me with the knife. He had set his heart on taking me down the bank with him, and did not think of any other method of obtaining his revenge. He was no murderer, — your father was not, — only a man crazed with love and jealousy. The movement to avoid his stroke seemed to have been totally unexpected by him, and for an instant he sat unsteadily in his position. I felt it, and half twisting myself over, caught him by the collar. He dropped his knife to grapple with me, and again it became a conflict of mere strength. He had my right hand in his clutch, and was tugging away

at my left, which still held the sapling. Forcing my right hand backward against my shoulder blade, he easily held it secure. All depended on my left.

"All at once it flashed upon me that I had him in my power. By loosing my hold upon the bush we should both swing over the bank, and he would topple head-foremost into the gorge below, while I should hold on by the tree gripped between my knees. I did not stop to think twice. He was twisting my right arm so that the pain was intense; I thought he would tear it from its socket. At the same time he was jerking with all his strength at my left. I tightened my hold upon the tree between my legs, locking my feet securely around it. When he surged upon my hand again I suddenly let go the bush. He swayed backward; I felt myself swing round as on a pivot. There was a struggle,—a clutch; and then I heard him pitch down the slaty side, while I hung head-downward over the edge of the abyss.

"It was with great difficulty that I regained the bank. I lay there a moment panting for breath, then staggered to my feet, and began instinctively to look around for my cap. I could not find it, and concluded it had gone over the bank

with *him*. That brought him to my mind, and I leaned over the edge and listened. I knew it was of no use; the bank was eighty feet sheer fall, with a rocky bottom. I found his hat, put it on, and started homeward. Perhaps I ought to have gone and looked for him. I might perhaps have saved my soul a double sin. I did not think of it then, and it is doubtful if I could have found him in the storm. I have thought since that the soft damp snow which must have been heaped against the bank,—clinging as it fell, and undisturbed by any breath of wind,—may have formed a cushioning mass saving him from instant death, but leaving him to smother, stunned and helpless, beneath its weight; or, worse still, to drown in the icy waters of the swollen creek. I ought, no doubt, to have given the alarm, and had search made for him as soon as possible. It did not once occur to me to do so. I only hurried on with one thought in my mind,—the man who stood between me and the woman I loved was dead! It was this that made me a murderer,—I left him to die, not merely careless whether he lived or not, *but even glad that he was dead!*”

FULFILLING LOVE'S COMMANDMENT.

“ I DO not know how I reached home. I thought very little of the dead man behind me, or of the act that caused his death, but much of the beautiful woman to whom I was going; not with the idea of possession,—that hardly entered my mind,—but with the thought that I had avenged her wrongs and relieved her of her husband's tyranny and suspicion. She might be no nearer to me, but she would not belong to him, nor her happiness be dependent on his caprice. This was the thought that filled my mind as I plodded doggedly homeward. I have wondered since what made me return at all; but I was anxious that she should know how faithfully I had obeyed her wishes,—that no fault of mine had prevented the success of my errand. Above all, I suppose I wished to see her once more. I had not thought of flight, but somehow felt that my opportunities for seeing her would not be many, and was determined to make one more at all hazards.

“ When I arrived in sight of the Inn, it was dark except her window and the light of the

smouldering fire in the public-room. How should I reach her, how speak with her, how tell her that she was free, — for despite what I had seen it did not occur to me that she would consider it as other than a relief. It may seem strange to you, but the fact that I had taken life did not oppress me at all. I neither pitied nor feared the bruised and battered mass that lay at the bottom of the ravine; I was simply glad that the man was dead. I went at once to my room, the one my mother now occupies. I found a bottle of rum and took a drink, which I sorely needed. I threw myself on my bed, and wondered how I should get speech with your mother. I dared not go through the public-room, for I knew that there were half-a-dozen men sleeping by the fire. I shrank from waking my mother, for I would then have to tell her all that had occurred. Suddenly the idea of the trap-door in the old overhang came into my mind. I knew that when the house was rebuilt it had been left in place, though it had long been unused. It was hung on wooden bar-hinges set into the chimney at one end, and into the house-logs at the other. It worked up and down indifferently, but the ends had been concealed by a narrow slat which served as a base-board

in the room above, being nailed to the logs to conceal the uneven ends of the flooring ; below, it was supported by a couple of braces nailed to the wall. It ran the whole length of the closet. To remove these braces was an easy matter. If nothing should be standing upon the trap-door in the room above, I could easily lower it without attracting attention.

“ I did not hesitate. Climbing on the closet shelves, I loosened the braces and cautiously lowered the door. When it swung down I raised my head and looked into the room. The candle was burning on the stand by the bedside. Your mother was lying beside you, with the quilt loosely thrown over her. Fearing that my sudden appearance might startle her, I rapped gently on the floor and called her name in a low voice. She waked with a start and sat up in bed, her hair falling about her shoulders, seeming dazed and confused. She had been asleep, probably dreaming.

“ ‘ What is it ? Is it you, dear ? ’ she asked in a low eager tone. I could see her face by the light of the candle on the stand beside her. Such a look of sweet expectancy I never saw on any human countenance before. Then first I realized my deplorable condition ; I had killed,

not her husband alone, but her love. I had not regarded myself as a murderer, until I thought how she would recoil from me when she knew the truth. Her attention was fixed on the door that opened on the stairway. I thought of dropping down from my perch and fleeing, as Cain did from the sight of man; but the Lord willed it otherwise. I do not know why I remained. When her attention was at last attracted to me she came forward, throwing something around her shoulders as she did so, and gazed in amazement at the long narrow trap-door. It must have seemed to her like a grave. She asked if I had seen her husband. I could only bow my head without looking up. I remember thinking that I could never look into her eyes again."

He paused. The perspiration was streaming down his face. He wiped it with his handkerchief, gazing steadily into the fire as he did so. His voice was strained and tremulous, and he spoke with that hurried nasal cadence which characterized the popular religious frenzy of that day. After a moment he proceeded.

"She bade me come up and relate what her husband had said,—all that had occurred. I swung myself into the room. She stepped back

and waited, standing beside a chair, one hand clasping the shawl about her throat. I stood before her overwhelmed, confounded. Despite the terrible facts, I could not but be conscious of her loveliness. It was as if an angel were before me, whom I worshipped even while I waited for the words of doom. She questioned, and I told her all, — truly, as it had happened. Her trunk was open a little way from the chair by which she stood, with many of the things it usually contained piled at the ends. It occurred to me that she had determined to leave as much of her belongings as she could, and follow her husband if I failed."

"That is why she gave me laudanum," interrupted Ozro, with a tone of relief. "She would have had to leave me, and did not want the pain of a conscious parting."

"Very likely," said the other, absently. "I stood looking down at the trunk," he resumed, "when I heard a gasp — a moan. She had said nothing, and I had not once looked up. When I did so she was deathly pale, — her left hand pressed above her heart, her face wearing a look of intense physical pain coupled with a strange undefinable fear.

"Go! go!" she said gaspingly, motioning me

away. Pity, aversion, and fear were mingled in her tone. She tottered, and I sprang forward to save her from falling. God! what a look of horror came into her eyes as she started back, putting up both her hands to repel me, unconscious that the shawl had fallen from her shoulders. She trembled, gasped again, and clutched the chair. I sprang toward the door, forgetful of everything but her peril.

“‘Stop! stop!’ she fairly shrieked, as my hand touched the latch. ‘Have you not done enough?’

“‘But you are ill,’ I pleaded; ‘let me call my mother.’

“‘And proclaim your presence here?’

“I had not thought of this peril to her good name. She moaned and sank into the chair. What could I do,—the husband’s murderer in the wife’s chamber? Her eyes closed, and she breathed short and quick.

“‘Let me do — something!’ I exclaimed.

“She looked up weakly.

“‘Go! go!’ she said, ‘quick!’

“‘But you?’ I asked.

“‘Never mind me! It is nothing — much! I have had it before — once! Go — fly! They will suspect me — and you —’

"She shuddered, and put her hands over her eyes as if to shut out some terrible picture. It gave me a thrill of rapture even in my agony to know that she thought of me at all. I had made no defence, no excuse.

" 'I did the best I could, Mrs. Evans,' I said.

"God help me, I fear it was a lie! I thought I spoke the truth; but I might have kept my hold, and let him kill me with the knife. I ought to have done so; it was my place to die. Then he would have been alive, and some time she would have found him and been happy. But it was God's will that it should be otherwise. He knoweth all things!"

The man stopped, and again wiped his face with the large silk handkerchief which he took out of the hat that lay beside him on the floor. He still held the pipe in his left hand, though he had long ago ceased smoking. He had not once looked at Ozro since telling him of his father's fate. The young man was pale and trembling, but he said pityingly, —

"Had you not better wait a while, sir?"

"No, no! it must be told *now*! For this thing came I here under God's mysterious guidance!" exclaimed the other, hurriedly.

"I was mean enough, you see," he continued,

"to think of myself even then; to plead — O God! and she was dying!"

He looked at Ozro, — his countenance so terribly distorted with horror and shame that the young man drew back in affright.

"I don't blame you," said the other, mistaking the movement for aversion, — "I don't blame you. But she did not repel me. She was an angel — your mother. She stretched out her hand. I touched it, and fell on my knees — not near her — away off: I could hardly reach her finger-tips.

"'I believe you,' she gasped, — 'I believe every word!'

"Then she snatched her hand away and pressed it to her heart again.

"'Go! go!' she repeated, 'fly — at once!'

"'Fly — where?' I rose to my feet. I suppose my tone showed my despair.

"'Anywhere! Do not come back — ever. Nobody else will believe — Here — take these!'

"She handed me her jewel-case, which lay on a pile of books by the chair. I had risen and started to go. I looked at it, and shook my head.

"'Oh, I forgot! Here — I have money. My purse — quick!'

"She pointed to her trunk. I seized it, dragged it toward her and picked up the pocket-book — a little red one I had often seen in her hand. She took it, touched the spring, and it flew open. A terrible spasm of pain seized her.

"'Jack!' she gasped, 'Jack! never let it be known — that you were — here — never! For my sake!'

"She half started up — trembled, gasped, fell back, and would have fallen from the chair had I not caught her. There were two or three convulsive gasps — that was all. I placed her head against the back of the chair, rubbed her hands, called her name — felt for her pulse. There was none. She was dead! I did not doubt it. Perhaps even then if I had given the alarm she might have been saved. I did not think it possible, or I am sure I would have done it. My only thought was to save her from shame, and I remembered only her anxiety that I should fly for her sake. It was cowardly, I know; but — well, there is no excuse. I was overwhelmed with horror. Snatching some of the money, I clambered back down the trap-door, replaced the braces as well as I could, seized my fur-coat (a present from my mother, made of skins my father had taken when he was a young man),

and putting on your father's hat almost unconsciously, started on my flight. God! how cruel to leave her sitting there dead, that cold, cold night! Through all its terrible hours I thought of that! In all the years since I have not been able to forget it!"

He rose, and staggered weakly across the room. Ozro again asked him if he had not better delay the rest of his story.

"No, no!" he exclaimed, "let me finish now. Let me have it over—be done with it forever!"

He sat down and resumed.

THE SHADOW OF CRIME.

“HALF-DAZED, I went out into the storm to ‘go away,’ as she had bidden me. That was my sole thought. I did not care for myself, and had no sense of fear. I felt that I must go in order that I might not reveal my love, and so cast a shadow on her good name. It was that which she had feared, which her husband’s suspicion had made her dread worse than death. I felt no remorse except for the evil I had wrought to her. I would have given my life to have restored her existence; nay, I would gladly have given my life to have restored *him*, if thereby life and happiness might come again to her.

“I turned after reaching the road and looked up through the blinding storm at the dimly-lighted windows. She seemed looking down at me as I had seen her before, the abundant hair falling over the fair shoulder, down beside the white arm almost to the floor. I knew that I had killed her—felt that I was her murderer.

I had not meant to do her ill: never in word or thought had I done her intentional harm. She had not given me a tender thought: I felt that it was a sacrilege to think of love in connection with her. But she knew and had forgiven — perhaps she had despised — my weakness; she also had excused my passion and recognized my sincerity; and she had charged me to go away, and save her honor from taint in the world's thought.

“I was going. I did not know where or how, — just away, out of sight, out of knowledge, out of the world may be. But for my tell-tale body, that would have been the easiest solution of the difficulty, and being the easiest would have been adopted. Were you ever tired, — thoroughly beaten out, I mean, — heart, brain, and body? That was my condition, and it is not surprising if my mind was not very clear. I had tramped through the storm to and from where I had fought for my life with a strong man; I had seen my love burned to ashes, and the woman I idolized die by my act. No wonder my thought was confused, and my conscience dead.

“Somehow, I did not think much of the man who was lying at the bottom of the ‘Gulf.’ I did not look upon his death as murder, nor had

I any sense of blood-guiltiness as to him. I had done him no wrong, unless the silly boastfulness of a hope which was honest and natural enough under the circumstances may be thought a wrong. I hated him before I saw him, — before I ever knew he was alive, — because of his harshness and injustice to *her*. I was sure he had been unjust, because *she* could not be in the wrong. I had been willing to go in search of him simply because she desired his presence, — just as I would have gone for a dog, or any brute she loved. Through it all I was conscious of a sense of gratification that he was dead : he could make *her* no more trouble. There was a feeling, too, that he had met his desert. So I stumbled on through the cold and the snow, leaving the dear dead behind me and hating the dead before me, but with no thought of fleeing from either because of a sense of guilt.

“I was glad too that he was dead because *she* loved him. Though I had not meant to do him harm, I hated him not less because she loved him than for the wrong he had done to her. For me, I had only to remember the look of horror that overspread her face when she realized that he had died by my hand, the self-loathing her eyes expressed as she thought that

we had fought because of our love for *her*; and then the slow, shrinking sense of loneliness and degradation that came as she realized not only her widowhood, but the stain that would rest upon her name because of the manner of her bereavement. This it was her wish above all things to conceal; and this I would hide for her sake. Perhaps she knew this injunction would be the last her lips would utter. Death came so swift that she had no time to bid farewell to life. I was glad it was so, but the suddenness made it all the more piteous. I had no hope. I knew what I had done must follow me all the days of my life, whether they were many or few,—and I cared not whether they should be few or many; I was only anxious to shield her memory by hiding myself.

“So I staggered on with the remembrance of what had happened whirling in my brain,—recollections terrible yet sweet: the beautiful woman, her agony, her untimely fate, her piteous fear of infamy. I did not know where I was going; I did not care. I would just as soon have gone over the bank as not; but I knew if my body should be found anywhere near the Inn, every one would say I had come back to her after killing her husband. I never dreamed that they

might accuse me of killing and robbing her, but always of something a thousand times worse. If they found me near *him* they would know we had fought, and of course would think it was about her. I thought of going to the Lake and ending it all by a plunge off the edge of the ice; but it had not yet frozen very far out, and the wind was in shore, so that my body would have been sure to be found. I was not afraid of dying, having no feeling of guilt for any intended result of my conduct.

“When I came near where I had met *him*, however, all this suddenly changed. It seemed as if the heavens opened, and I saw everything as plain as the Judgment Day will reveal it. By that time there was no track visible where the road was, but just a smooth white mantle over all the earth; the snow was still falling soft and steady, as it had done ever since it grew dark. All at once a light shone through the falling snow upon the road before me,—and there it stayed, going on when I went forward, and stopping when I stopped. And in that light all the time I saw *him*. He was pale and shadowy, yet I saw him as plain as day. I knew that he was dead,—that it was n’t *him* at all, or only his spirit if any part of him; but I could n’t get

rid of it. Fast or slow, backward or forward, one side or the other, go where I would, it was all the same, — there he was, looking right at me and through me all the time. I knew at once that he had come back to stay with me wherever I might go, and that this was to be my punishment. For the first time it came to my mind that my false and foolish boasting had made all the trouble, and destroyed two lives. *Then* I saw myself a murderer, — not an intended, revengeful murderer, but a reckless, careless, selfish one. I had boasted of my love and its hopes, and this jealous, fanatic nature had been inflamed by my wrong-doing to commit the cruel act I had condemned. He had loved, but he could not trust; he could not believe in *her* innocence and purity, how then should he believe my angry denial? He had loved, — ay, he still loved. I saw it now. He did not seek me out of revenge. His look did not reproach me for the wrong I had done to *him*, but for the evil I had wrought to *her*. It was sorrow rather than anger that impelled his spirit to its vengeful task.

“I went on, guided by this presence, until I reached the place where the old Portage crossed the Shore Road. The stage was just coming across the flat from the village, — it used to run

to the harbor then. It suddenly occurred to me that I had heard the stranger tell the landlord to put his portmanteau on the stage when it came along, if he should not return, as he might walk on until it overtook him. It had evidently been his intention to come out here, take a look at the place where the woman he loved was staying, and then return and take the stage westward. I had on his hat and my own fur-coat. Why should I not take his place? I thought I could see satisfaction in the white ghostly face that shone upon the snow before me as I formed this resolution. I turned and walked on westward. After an hour or so the stage overtook me. As the light of the lamps fell on me, the driver called out: 'Hello, is that Mr. Evans?'

"'Yes,' I answered. 'Have you got my portmanteau?'

"'Safe enough; but I began to fear I was going to miss you.'

"'Oh, I'm all right. I knew you would have a hard time, and thought I would walk on ahead a little way. Are you full?'

"'No — only two; pile in.'

"He stopped beside me. I opened the door and climbed in. Fortunately it was a driver I had never seen. On the fifth day afterward

'Jackson Evans' got out of the stage in Cincinnati, and two days later was floating down the Ohio on a flat-boat. There was an address on the portmanteau I had assumed the ownership of, but I did not know whether it was the right one or not. So I broke it open: learned from papers in it the address of your father's bankers; took it to a bank, and paid them to transmit it to New York. This took the last money I had, and I hired out as a boatman. It was late in the season, but the river was still open, and there was one captain who was going to risk getting through. He wanted hands, and I went with him. On that day Jackson Evans disappeared, and Abner Jackson took his place. Two years afterward this change of name was legalized by special statute. Mississippi was a new State then, and it was thought good policy to make things of that sort easy to new-comers. Poin-dexter, the governor, took a fancy to me, — having an interest in the boat I was running then, — and when I hinted that the name was an assumed one, he volunteered to have it legalized, and did so.

"Up to this time the dead man had been with me all the while. I saw him now and then after I went on the boat, but not regularly. Before

we got to Orleans I was taken with fever, and when I recovered I knew he was always with me ; but I did not actually see him except at long intervals. When I came to look in a glass after my recovery, I found that a lock of my hair had turned as white as snow. I knew then it was the mark of Cain. After that I wore my hat at all times. I don't mind the mark now, but the habit has become fixed, so that I feel uncomfortable in the presence of others unless covered.

“Strange enough, the Lord prospered me. Perhaps it was because I attended to what was placed in my hands, and had no inclination to dissolute society. I liked always to be engaged, but did not care to be alone, — in fact, I did not feel myself alone at any time. As I had lost all hope, so I had lost all fear. I did not care whether I lived or died. I was not a religious man, and had no inclination toward repentance nor any fear of punishment. I felt like one serving out a penalty he knows to be just, inevitable, and eternal. I knew that this life of suffering could only be exchanged for another just as bad : I did not think it could be any worse. So I went on doing faithfully what came in my way.

“The mark of Cain helped me. The fact that I never removed my hat in the presence of any

one attracted attention ; and I suppose the habitual seriousness which was the result of the consciousness of ghostly company gave me a gravity and earnestness somewhat unusual among the boatmen on the river. At all events, I soon found myself in command of a boat, — then of a better one, until the name of Abner Jackson is about as well known up and down the river as that of any man that ever had charge of a load of passengers or signed a bill of lading.

“ The life suited me. I had no interests outside of it, and nothing to hope for beyond it. So I ran my boat, took care of my passengers, and made money for my owners. Nobody trifled with me, and everybody felt safe in my care. When I first took command, there was a good deal of curiosity expressed because I wore my hat all the time. On one of my first trips the passengers protested against my wearing it at the table, and one remarked that to do so was an insult to the ladies. I asked the ladies to excuse us, and invited him to accompany me on deck. He apologized — after we had exchanged shots. His wound was serious, but before we reached New Orleans he was out of danger. Soon afterward a gambler came on board at Natchez-under-the-Hill, and deliberately pulled off my

hat in presence of the passengers and crew. I shot him where he stood, put on my hat and went about my business. Some other experiences with the desperadoes who infested the river gave me a reputation for coolness and determination that was of great advantage. After a time I became myself a part owner of the boat I commanded. I also bought a plantation and negroes, and engaged in trade. Whatever I did prospered. I took no special pride in this, though of course it was a sort of satisfaction. I did not know what I should do with my acquisitions, or who would profit by them.

"No one ever recognized me in all the time I followed the river, though I saw more than one familiar face. Among these was my mother's cousin, Sidney Rigdon. He had stayed some weeks at the Inn during the fall before I went away. Afterward he had become one of the leading men among a new religious sect, at that time much talked about because of the peculiar name that was applied to them. They were called Mormons, though I learned from him that their real name was 'The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.' I managed to see a good deal of him without letting him suspect who I was. He seemed very much in earnest, led an

exemplary life, and judging from him I formed a very good opinion of the strange people with whom he had cast in his lot. From him I learned how matters were going on here at the Inn. I could not understand all that he told me: since I came here it has been made plain. A year or so after this I sent some money to my mother,—a hundred dollars; and after that, some every year. If she ever received it, I do not suppose she knew from whom it came.”

“I think she suspected,” said Ozro, thoughtfully.

“After that I used to see more of the spirit. Sometimes it would be with me almost all the while for a trip or two; then it would not appear for months. Sometimes it would not be visible, but I would know it was with me all the same. I did not understand what it wanted nor why it came so often, and so kept right on with my business. Of course I used to think of matters up here at the Inn a good deal, and sometimes would quite make up my mind to come and see how things were getting on. Then the spirit would go away and leave me.

“I did n't want to come; but I soon knew I'd have to. Nobody can guess how wearing it is to have somebody else around with you all

the while, and feel that he sees and knows all that you see and know and feel and think. That's the way it was with me. Ever since the night I met the murdered man's spirit down by the 'Gulf,' I had n't ever been fairly alone. Sometimes I 'most forgot him, but if I did he was sure to jog my elbow in some way or other, just to let me know he was there, I suppose. I knew there was no use in trying to get away from him, and so never made the attempt; but I was very glad when he left me to myself now and then. It was strange how he would come sometimes when I was least expecting him. I have had that face come between me and one I was speaking to, between my eye and the page of a book I was reading, between me and a bill of lading I was putting my hand to. I never knew when or where or in what mood it would appear. Sometimes it looked angry and troubled, sometimes sad; and then again calm and pitiful, as if regretting the task it had to perform. If I became angry or contemplated injustice, it was sure to look reproachful or distressed. If I chanced to take pleasure in the society of a woman, it became flushed and angry, and would pursue me everywhere.

"I cannot say that I was afraid of it. I grew

to know its moods and expect its presence ; but it was very annoying in its more excited forms, and would follow me about persistently until I changed my conduct or intention. I tried once or twice to drown it in drink, but my sufferings were only made greater thereby. My unconscious moments were filled with horrible visions, and in my waking hours the spirit pursued me unceasingly. This companion, invisible to others, served to make me silent and reserved without becoming at all moody or sulky. After a time I found I could converse with it,—not indeed getting specific replies to questions I might ask, but seeming to know just what it would say if speech were in its power.”

“Don’t you think this may have been a delusion?” asked Ozro, cautiously.

“Do I seem a man likely to be self-deceived?” asked Jackson, severely.

In truth he did not. Ozro wondered what his associates on the river would have thought if they had known what visions the captain of the popular steamer had.

“No,” continued Jackson, “I do not pretend to know just what this ghostly appearance was. Whether it was the ‘spiritual body’ of which the Apostle speaks, or only a spiritual influence that

shaped itself to my consciousness in that form, I do not know. But the thing I *do* know is, it was of God."

He raised his eyes reverently as he uttered these words.

"No doubt, no doubt!" said Ozro, seriously.

"Yes, it was of God," repeated Jackson; "and in this way I have learned a good deal about your father, Ozro; and strange as it may seem, we have become the best of friends. He was a good man, though of course he had his faults. I think the task of keeping around with me was as great a penance to him as it was to me for a time, but he came at length to enjoy it too. He must have been a very good business man in his day, for nothing pleases him so well even yet as to have me do a good thing in that line; and if ever I go against his warning, I am sure to lose. That is why I took to your machines so quick. He was betwixt me and them all the time,—especially the little one. I did n't understand that, till Dewstowe brought those other pins. It's natural of course that he should be anxious about your welfare, but I am satisfied that he feels a special interest in your temporal good. For this reason I am sure you will be fortunate in business."

Ozro smiled, but the other was too busy with his thoughts to note even the shrug of incredulity that accompanied the smile.

"Strange as it may seem," he continued, "I think the fact that we were partners, as it were, in the wrong that was done your mother, lies at the bottom of our association, — if I may use that word to express such a relation. Of course I know nothing of the laws of that world of which he is now a part; I only know that he has the power of making himself visible to me when he is not visible to others. I am satisfied that he is not only able to read my thoughts, but that he cannot help knowing them. I have a notion that this is very often quite as irksome to him as it is to me, — perhaps even more so; that my pain, unhappiness, or misfortune affects him not less sensibly than it does me; that this is due, or was at first at least, not so much to sympathy, as to a sort of fate, — a certain community of woe from which neither of us can escape.

"Like me, his crime has forever separated him from your mother and her love. She went out of the world, not hating him nor me, — for she could not hate any one, — but with a sickening disgust, which eternity will not be long enough

to wear away, toward both of us. That is our punishment, I feel sure. Where she is we cannot come. She started in the eternal race millions of years ahead of us. If we get to where she was then, we shall only find her far beyond. That is my belief. You may think me a visionary, but my life proves me to be anything but that. No one can deny that Abner Jackson has been a sober, hard-headed, practical man, who has prospered in most of his undertakings, and made as few mistakes in fifteen years as often falls to a man's lot who does anything like the amount of business I have transacted. If I have learned something of the world beyond, it is because fate has laid a burden on me that not many men are called to bear. I know that I shall be forgiven, — I haven't any doubt or fear of that. Not only have I the assurance of the spirit, but the Lord has spoken to me by the mouth of His Holy Prophet, and I know that I shall be saved ; nay, I am assured that I shall be saved 'with an exceeding great salvation.' But the stain of blood-guiltiness rests upon my soul, — upon mine and his, — and must ever rest there, unless washed out by special atonement. This separates us forever by divine decree from the victim of our sin. This it is that links your

father and me together, — the tie of endless expiation. Not alone here on earth, but during the endless ages of eternity shall we be united. Forever and forever we shall walk the plains of heaven together, doing the will of the Almighty and bowing to it without murmuring, — never seeing her whom we wronged, nor knowing the new name she has received in the celestial City, but never ceasing to think of her and ever longing to see her face. I am not a visionary, Ozro, but the Lord has taught me by a hard lesson and in a strange and notable way. I am not even a religious enthusiast. My tongue refuses to utter the ecstatic praises that fall from other lips. I can only do the will of God in silence, — ‘faithful in a few things.’

“About two years ago, I finally determined to come back and see for myself how things were going on at the Inn. I knew you must be a man grown by this time, and I thought I might be able to do something to help repair the wrong I had done so long ago. I could n’t make good your loss even in a pecuniary sense, for your father would have been a rich man if he had lived, Ozro, — a rich man. I take it he was pretty well off as it was ; but he would have stood away up among the biggest of them if he

had lived, for he was a business man and no mistake. I think you must be like him, by the way you've held things together here at the Inn. Mother tells me you've had your own way for five or six years, and have managed to keep the place going and kept the interest on the mortgage down besides. I don't see how you did it, I confess; but then Dotty has been some help toward the last, I suppose. Mă always was a manager; but Pă must have been a drag. He seems to be all broke up. I can't understand it. Mă used to be very fond of him, and there never was any difference between them, except about me. He seems to lay their estrangement all to you; but I suppose it was the drink. Yet it don't seem to me he would have gone so completely to the bad if she had n't been so hard on him. That's neither here nor there, though, now.

"I did n't know what sort of a chap you'd grown up, and so could n't tell, of course, what might be done. I had a notion I might get you a job on the river, — I'm owner of as good a boat as floats, you see, — an' I did n't know but you might like to go back with me and work her a while before taking command on your own account. Your father never seemed to like the

idea, and I see now it would n't do at all. You ain't that sort of a chap: not but you could do it well enough if there was need to; but there ain't no need of it, and besides your fitter for something else, — there ain't no denying that. Perhaps it's better too. Not but what the command of a river boat is a good berth: it's an honorable place and a responsible one, that requires a sober man and a brave one to fill it as it ought to be filled. You'd do it well. I saw that when you gripped that dog the first night I came to the Inn; but perhaps you can do other things better, and every man ought to do what he can do best, — there's no doubt about that. Well, I shan't ever go back to the river again. So it's no use to talk of that."

IN THE NEW JERUSALEM.

“ I DID not feel any serious apprehension in revisiting my old home, though I knew that the act which attended my departure must be regarded by others as the foulest of crimes. I was well aware that no one would believe the story I have told you of my encounter with your father. I had learned that a body was found which, though not conclusively identified, was suspected to have been his ; but I never heard that there was any suspicion that he came to his death by my hand. As no one knew of his coming to the Inn except myself, this notion was not likely to prevail ; besides, the stage-driver had asserted stoutly that he took your father safe and sound as far as Erie at least. I knew too that time had made great changes in my appearance, and thought it not unlikely that I could spend months here, as I have done, without my identity being suspected.

“ I closed up my business as well as I could, however, thinking it possible I might never return. When I reached Cleveland, I became

possessed of a strange disinclination to coming farther. For the first time I think I felt actually afraid. I was afraid to come near the old place, — afraid to meet my parents and the neighbors. My father I knew mourned me as dead ; my mother — well, I was afraid to meet her eye. If I had known what she really thought, I would have returned long before merely to clear my name from the suspicion of theft. What do you suppose became of the diamonds ? I have seen diamonds since, and know that is what they were."

Jackson turned sharply toward Ozro as he spoke.

"You had better ask Dotty."

"Dotty ? What does she know about them ?"

"Your mother hid them, and forgot the place of their concealment ; that is all."

"Ah, and Dotty found them ?"

"I found them, — or rather the ghost showed them to me."

"You mean — my mother ?"

Ozro bowed.

"Poor mother, how she has suffered !" said Jackson, with a sigh. "But that does not explain Dotty's connection with the jewels."

"I gave them to her."

"You did! Do you know what they are worth?"

"No — it does n't matter."

"Not if she marries Dewstowe?"

"No," decidedly.

"That's not like your father, sir," said Jackson, reproachfully. "Or rather," he added in a softer tone, "it *is* like your mother. There are not many *men* who give without taking note of the value of the gift."

"I wish it were more," huskily.

"'Even all that he hath,' responded Jackson, meditatively.

"Why not," said Ozro, passionately, "if it will give her pleasure?"

"Strange, strange!" said the elder man half to himself; "there is a love that gives by rule and measure, and demands a strict account; and another that gives without asking, and demands nothing in return. Yes, you are right. Though love may be sometimes cruel, that which esteems another's happiness above self is not likely to go far wrong. But don't be rash, my son, — don't be rash. Time brings a good many things to a man who has nerve enough to wait for them.

"But to return to my story," he continued,

seeing that Ozro sat moodily looking into the fire and made no reply. "As I said, a great fear took hold upon me at Cleveland. It seemed to possess your father, too. Every time I thought of continuing my journey, he would appear to me with that distressed and anxious look I had learned to know so well as the precursor of evil, and flit about before my eyes, hiding everything I looked at. So I stayed there several weeks, doubtful whether I would continue my journey or not.

'About this time there was a good deal being said concerning a great Temple the Saints — the Mormons as you call them — had opened at the town of Kirtland, some forty miles away, where the New Jerusalem of the Latter Day is located, whence the Prophet hath declared 'salvation shall flow to the uttermost parts of the earth.' There was much curiosity about this Temple, which was said to have double pulpits, great winding stairs, veils of colored silk that stretched from side to side, so rich that the light was mellowed by their hues, and of so frail a texture that when the congregation were hushed in prayer they sometimes showed the waving of Moroni's wings, as he came to whisper in the Prophet's ear the commandment of the Most High. Curiosity was stimulated also by the fact

that this Temple was proclaimed to have been built under the direct advisement and oversight of the Almighty. Indeed, it was known to have been erected by the people themselves, few of whom had any special mechanical training, under the immediate supervision of the Prophet, who besides having no architectural knowledge is without skill as a draughtsman, and indeed is but an indifferent penman. He gave orders day by day what the workmen should do, without the aid of any plan or trestle-board. Sometimes he grew impatient and would not wait for inspiration, and then the work would have to be taken down and done over again,—for the Prophet, though he is the Lord's Anointed, is exceedingly weak, and fleshly pride not seldom checks the holy influence upon his human nature. Sometimes, the brethren tell me, there would be nothing done for weeks, or if anything were attempted it would have to be torn down and done over, because the Most High was angry at the Prophet's pride. Then the congregation would be assembled and continue in prayer until the rush of Moroni's pinions was felt, and they knew that God and their Prophet were reconciled.

“This building, thus divinely planned — like the one constructed on Mount Zion — was said to

be unlike anything ever seen on earth, and in the apparent richness of its adornment and splendor of its effects unparalleled by anything known in our Western world since the children of Nephi builded the Temple of Mexitli, which the unbelievers seized and desecrated to the service of idols, and stained with human blood. It was because of this ravishment of the ancient Temple by the wicked and debauched among the priesthood that the new one had no secret passages or covered ways. Only silken curtains of royal purple half hid the high-priest as he ascended by the winding stair to the Prophet's seat, and the veil that hid the Holy of Holies where he retired alone to commune with the Most High through His chosen messenger the blessed Moroni, transformed into an angel of light for his faithfulness at the Hill of Cumnorah, whereby the Holy Book of the Western Continent — the New Word which supplements the ancient revelation — was preserved for our salvation. There is a curious cave or deep narrow gorge near the site of the Temple, and unbelievers said there was a secret way between this and the Holy Place whereby the Prophet's disappearances were deftly managed to deceive the uninitiated. But though the cave was open to all, and was thronged every

day by curious visitors who inspected with the utmost minuteness every inch of its interior, no one has ever found the hidden way nor any evidence of its existence. These and many other marvellous and sometimes absurd stories came to my ears, and I began to lose the good opinion of this people which I had received from Rigdon; but as the Temple was open to unbelievers only on holy days and public occasions, I readily fell in with the proposal of a traveller who was stopping at the same inn with me, that we should drive out and stay over a Sabbath at the New Jerusalem.

“As we journeyed thither, our conversation was that of unbelievers. Neither of us had any faith in the new sect, and both expected to be able to penetrate and expose the deceptions practised on its weak and deluded followers. As we drew near, we were surprised at the sentiments of the people. Some, indeed, spoke with no little fanatical bitterness; very many reviled the Prophet in malignant terms,—but all agreed that his followers were sober, industrious, intelligent, and devoted. They were all native Americans. Almost all of them, we were told, had been good and acceptable members of other churches before they joined the Saints.

"It was Friday night when we reached the little village and stopped at the inn kept by one of the most prominent of the new sect. He was a modest, quiet man, who only smiled at the discourteous banter some of our fellow-travellers indulged in with regard to his faith, and said: 'Wait and see, gentlemen, and decide for yourselves. That is the way I did. You have to look after your salvation, and I after mine. So you must take your way, and I will take mine.'

"The next day we loitered about the town. Our first impressions as to the character of the people were confirmed by all we saw. Whatever might be their religious errors, we were bound to confess that a more peaceable, industrious, and kindly community we had never seen than the few hundred Saints who dwelt at the New Jerusalem. In fact they seemed to be distinguished from the people around them only by unusual sobriety, industry, and contentedness. I have often thought since that time that the divine guidance in the establishment of the new belief was in nothing more apparent than in the supreme wisdom which located its New Jerusalem in the very centre of the Western Reserve. In the very midst of a population of almost unmixed

New England origin, inheriting all their religious intensity, zeal for knowledge, self-reliance, and unsparing inclination to investigate and expose all shams, — here the uncultured Prophet who wrote with difficulty and read with ease only with the aid of the miraculous lenses, the Urim and Thummim which translated to his vision all texts and tongues, — here, by divine commandment, he pitched the New Jerusalem and laid the foundations of the Temple. The city of the Saints is surrounded by a population of the highest average of intelligence to be found in the world, of the strictest morality, the most universal religiousness, and the most fearless independence. In the three counties which lie nearest, it is said that less than five per cent of the population are of foreign birth ; four fifths of the people are of the purest New England stocks. In many towns the church membership includes the entire adult population. Less than one in a hundred is unable to read and write. From this people the Church of the Latter-Day Saints of Jesus Christ has drawn almost its entire membership. At this day less than four-score of its members are of foreign birth. Only within a twelvemonth have they sent out missionaries to enlighten this and other lands.

"Many of these facts I learned that day; others I learned afterward; but they fairly represent the impression produced by that day's observation. I was favorably inclined toward the new religion because it seemed to make happy homes, peaceful and industrious people. Besides that, it seemed to me that a false religion could not live in such a blaze of intelligence, and that an impostor would not have chosen such a location for the performance of false miracles. I did not meet my cousin Sidney Rigdon, as he was absent in the work of the Church, for which he has been especially set apart. I was a stranger among a strange people, but I had not felt such a sense of peace and rest since I grappled with your father on the slippery edge of the 'Gulf.' He too was content. When his countenance appeared hovering over my bed as I dropped asleep that night, it was radiant with approval. Yet little did I imagine how near I was to wonderful events; nor did I dream that before the morrow's sun had set, my lot would be irrevocably cast in with this little company of Saints,—that I would have touched the Prophet's hand and said to him: 'Whither thou goest I will go; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God!'"

THE VOICE OF THE PROPHET.

“THE Saints had gathered in the Temple and the music of the hidden performers was floating through the solemn shaded spaces when we reached the place of worship the next morning. All was calm and silent save for this and the voices that called to each other from the pulpits that stood opposite, each with their four tiers of dignitaries who represented the temporal and spiritual power of the Church. We were given seats near the green veil which hangs midway between these thrones of high-priest and president, either of which the Prophet may occupy, supported by the four-and-twenty Elders and the twelve Apostles in one, and the twelve Councillors and the Presidents of the Seventies when he sits in the other.

“This organization was not then complete. Of elders and teachers there were enough, but there was a vacant seat in the order of the twelve Apostles, eleven having been chosen by divine direction more than a month before ; but

as to the twelfth, no revelation had been vouchsafed. At this time the people were gathered together in order that special prayer and supplication might be made for divine guidance in this matter. The Prophet was in the Holy Place awaiting the result. There was a solemn, but not artistic, chant intoned by the congregation, and then the music died away, the veils were drawn by invisible hands, and the people bowed in prayer. Sitting close to the wall and in the shadow of the veil, the fact that I did not remove my hat had probably not been observed; at least no objection was made. For myself, I was not aware of it; the habit had become so firmly fixed that I never thought of departing from it. It was a very solemn scene, — the hundreds of earnest worshippers between the veils separated from other hundreds on the other side, all bowed in fervent whispered petitioning. I watched it a moment, and then bowed my head with the rest. It was many years since I had witnessed any religious ceremony, and this seemed more solemn and impressive than any I had ever beheld. Still the low inarticulate murmur grew and swelled in the lofty space above the veils. I thought of what I had heard of the coming of Moroni in answer to the prayers of

the congregation, and looked up just in time to see a strange tremor of the veils, as if invisible wings had indeed swept the air about them. There was, too, a rushing sound as if a wind swept through the Temple ; yet I knew that not a breath was stirring in the sultry air without.

"Instantly every one of the worshippers seemed to have become aware of these things, and the voice of prayer was spontaneously changed to praise. It was still only a murmur, but it was mingled with sobs and half-uttered ejaculations of praise. 'Amen!' 'Hallelujah!' 'Glory to God!' came from here and there within the veils and beyond the confines of the two between which I was seated. Then the ejaculations grew into a tumultuous murmur ; the angel's name and that of the Prophet were mingled with the various appellations of the Most High. It was a solemn scene. I waited, strangely moved. Could it be true ? Had the divine messenger indeed passed over the bowed heads of the believing people ? Had we indeed heard the rustle of seraphic pinions ? I waited in rapt expectation.

"Suddenly a voice, which seemed strangely remote because of the silken barriers that intervened, struck the chords of a hymn evidently familiar to the worshippers, though I had never

heard it before. The air was simple, yet full of a solemn exaltation. Faith and triumph were blended in the words. Then all arose and sang. Tears and smiles took the place of tears and lamentations. Invisible hands drew the curtains aside once more. The music of the unseen musicians mingled with the swelling chant. It was an anthem of praise because their prayer had been heard. The angel of the Lord had come, and His people were comforted. Finally the chant ended, and the congregation sat down. All was silent save the breath of trembling expectation which fluttered over the throbbing multitude. I do not know how long we waited. Suddenly, as I watched the breathless throng, a sigh of relief passed through it; every face lighted up, and every eye was fixed on the Prophet's place.

"I followed the general gaze, and saw the curtain that veiled the Holy Place tremble as if a hand had passed gropingly along it. Still no one was to be seen. Again it trembled; then it was parted in twain, and a man came forth with the dim uncertain gaze that characterizes one whose eyes have been blinded by too intense a light. It was the Prophet, clad in the white robe he wore only when he spoke by inspiration.

"It was the first time I had ever seen the celebrated founder of the new faith. I do not know what it was that made his presence so impressive. I have come very near him since then, but have never seen him without feeling that I stood in the presence of a superior being. He was by no means notable for comeliness of form or regularity of feature. Hardly above the average height, compact and sinewy, with a look of calm determination on his face, you might pass him a thousand times and not guess that there was anything remarkable about him. If you chanced to note his eyes they would hold you; or his smile, that would attract. Here was no parade, no glamour, — just a man clad in a white robe, standing in the bright light of day before a thousand people. Yet I had never been so hushed and awed by human presence. Before he had spoken a word my heart said: 'This man is a Prophet. He may be uncultured, erring, human, but he is sent of God.'

"He stood looking over the hushed assemblage for a moment like one who knows not what he wishes to say. The place where he stood was not like a pulpit, though it was the apex of the narrowing circles of seats on which the spiritual dignitaries sat. There was no desk, no

book, no cushion. It was just a little circular space in which he stood alone, as if cut off from all the rest of the world. The silken curtain that hung from the low railing about it was of dark green, like that which shaded the entrance to the Holy Place from which he came. The eleven Apostles and the four-and-twenty Elders turned in their places and looked up at him anxiously. All these simple things made a peculiar impression on me.

“There is nothing stately or magnificent about the Temple, nothing ornate or artistically remarkable, but I doubt if such notable effects were ever produced by such simple means. The Lord knew the poverty of his Saints, and showed the Prophet how he might be most acceptably worshipped without extravagant expenditure. The Prophet had not the treasured wealth of Israel at his beck, nor the kings of the earth to send presents of gold and silver and precious stones for the adornment of the holy edifice; but I question if even Solomon's priceless Temple brought a more worshipful mood, or induced a more solemn and ecstatic frame of mind in those who entered its hallowed precincts. I doubt if the Temple at Kirtland will hold a thousand people, — I am sure it will not seat

that number ; but many stood and many more sat in the sloping aisles, and, — I do not know why it was, why it is, for it is a daily miracle; but it always seems to me that the congregation which gathers there is an innumerable multitude. Perhaps it is because there are never any vacant places, and the light falls only on the pulpits at the end, while the tinted veils increase the solemn shadow in which the congregation sit.

“ It was a long time before the Prophet spoke. I had expected to find him loud-voiced and positive, — an impostor who bore down unbelief by sheer force of assertion and persistence of iteration. I had expected to find readiness of speech, vigor of declamation, and vehemence of gesture. None of these things appeared. He stood looking over the audience with strange indecision, one hand resting quietly upon a post of the railing before him, while the other plucked absently, rather than nervously, at the curtain which depended from it. Self-distrust, almost humiliation, rather than self-confidence characterized his manner. He seemed like one compelled to utter words he did not wish to speak. Strongly as my curiosity was aroused, I could not restrain a feeling of pity for one so evidently compelled to do violence to his own desires.

“His voice, though firm and resonant, had a peculiar sympathetic character that touched the heart, silenced doubt, and quite effaced all consideration of the speaker. He had not uttered a dozen words before I had forgotten that this man was Joseph Smith the Mormon, of whom I had heard so much, and only wondered what he was going to say, — what was the message he was about to deliver.

“‘Saints, elders, and apostles!’ said the Prophet. The form of address startled me, not so much by the terms used as by the order in which they were arranged. I had not been a very good boy, but there was one thing I was forced to learn very thoroughly in my youth, — the New Testament. There are few chapters of it that I have not, at one time or another, committed to memory as an appointed task; and if I had seen little of the Holy Word for years, I was still familiar with its language. It struck me that this putting of the body of believers before the select official few was a thing unheard of since the time when Paul had written, ‘To all the saints in Jesus Christ, *with* the bishops and deacons.’ It was a little thing, perhaps, but it made a deep impression on my mind.

“‘Brethren,’ continued the Prophet, humbly, ‘the Lord hath made known His will concerning that matter which we have in hand, and him that shall be chosen. In ancient times we know that the place made vacant in “the ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell” was filled by lot from among those chosen by the congregation of saints. When eleven had been chosen to the new apostleship by direction of the Spirit and without dissent among the congregation, we were for a time left without guidance, and it was proposed that the ancient method be adopted, and names were accordingly selected for that purpose. It was for direction in this matter that we gathered here for prayer to-day. In answer to your supplications it is vouchsafed to me to deliver this message from the Most High:—

“‘Behold, I have given commandment to my angel Moroni, that he shall say to the Prophet of the Lord, who shall repeat it to my people: Trouble not yourselves about the choice of my servants. Behold I the Lord know in what manner to select my ministers, and who they shall be. All these things I have foreknown from the beginning. And behold there sitteth among you at this time one who is not of you,

yet he shall be my apostle, the minister and witness of my truth. Behold he knoweth it not, nor doth his heart incline unto my ways ; but I have brought him through darkness and tribulation, that he may glorify my name. I have made him to sin deeply and love weakly. There is blood upon his hands. He hath wronged the widow and the fatherless. Yet he shall be my witness. He shall make atonement for wrong, and offer his blood in expiation even as I shall command. Behold, I have put my mark upon him and preserved him many days for this thing, — that he shall enhance my glory, make unbelievers ashamed, and win for himself a great name, even like unto that Stephen who first of all gave his life for my sake.

“ ‘Behold now he sitteth in the sanctuary,’ exclaimed the Prophet, with a fervor he had not before shown, while his eyes seemed to burn into my heart and read my inmost thought. ‘He heareth the voice of my Prophet, and knoweth the truth of his word. He weareth another’s name, and hath fled from the face of his kindred. But I have set my mark upon him, — even in the hair of his head have I set my mark, and I will claim him for my own. There is none here that knoweth his face, but

I the Lord know it, — also all his words and ways!

“‘When he cometh to join himself with my people, he shall fill the vacant place and do all that I shall command him. Behold now he sitteth covered as to his head in the congregation of the Saints. So also shall he alone sit covered in the seat of the apostle, because I have put my mark upon him, and he shall remain covered, to hide it from the sight of men, until he shall exchange it for a crown of everlasting glory!’

“The Prophet paused. Every one turned and looked at me. I felt myself the centre of all the eyes of that seemingly unnumbered host; but I looked not to the right or left. Amazed as I was at the word to which I had listened, I was determined to give no sign. Even if the Prophet had not known of whom he spoke, the eyes of the congregation would have pointed me out to him. He gazed at me sharply for a while, and said:

“‘The angel hath given me the name of him that shall be the twelfth apostle, but I know it not.’

“He held up a small piece of paper as he spoke, and after looking keenly at it, shook his head and continued:—

“‘I do not know it; I never saw it before. Nevertheless it shall be enrolled as the twelfth, and from this day the order of the apostleship shall be accounted full.’

“The Prophet handed the paper to one who sat in the circle beneath him. It was passed from hand to hand. Each read it and shook his head. The services were soon over.

“That night I went to the Prophet's house, where, in the language of Scripture, ‘He told me all that ever I did.’ As soon as the necessary formalities could be arranged, I took the seat reserved for me on the left of the circle of the apostles. Because of this I am here to confess my sin, to make reparation so far as I can, and to offer the atonement that both the law and our holy faith demand.”

UNEXPECTED RESULTS.

“**M**R. BUTTON,” said Ozro, breaking in upon the narrative.

“No, no!” said the other, protestingly, “not Button. I have saved my parents’ name, at all events. That is what the lawyers tell me. My name is Abner Jackson, by special enactment of the Legislature of Mississippi; and by that name alone can I be indicted, tried, and hanged. I’m sorry for Ma, and for Pa too [Ozro noticed that he pronounced the words with the same curious modulation that Dotty used], for he is a proud man in his way, Pa is, and perhaps, all things considered, has about as much reason for being proud as most mortals. I’ve noticed,” he added with grim humor, “that it don’t take much to support a pretty rank growth of pride; and though I have found strength to obey the Lord’s will thus far, yet I want to atone for my fault under a borrowed name. Remember that, Ozro,” he added solemnly, “when you deliver me to the judge, and the judge delivers me to the officer, and my atonement is made complete.”

He raised his eyes and moved his lips as if in prayer.

"Well, Mr. Jackson then, if you will have it so," said Ozro. "I hope I need not tell you that your sad story has awakened my profoundest sympathies; that goes without saying. It is a pity that the facts with regard to the whole matter could not have been known before. It would have saved much misery."

"The Lord knows what is best for his children," was the submissive answer. "It might have made much more instead."

"True, true," said Ozro, thoughtfully; "at least we have the consolation of thinking that the end is near."

"Very near," said the other. "There remains little more for me to do."

"I did not mean that," said Ozro. "Like my mother, I believe every word you say. I only meant that we are near the end of mystery."

"Of course," said Jackson, dully, "of course."

"I want to say, too," said Ozro, rising and going to the window to hide his emotion, "that while I do not doubt that her death was due to your conduct, I do not think you intended any wrong, and your penitence has fully atoned for your fault."

"I am very grateful," said the other, quietly.
"I've done my best."

Looking up the hillside, Ozro marked the spot where his mother lay buried.

"Poor mother!" he said to himself, while he forgave as she had forgiven.

"As to my father —"

"Don't say anything about that, Ozro, if you please. That is n't your matter; the law must settle that. I am not answerable to you for your father's death; but so far as I may, I hold myself bound to make good to you such pecuniary loss as you have suffered thereby."

"I do not want it, — I do not need it," said Ozro, hastily.

"But you will not refuse?" interposed the other, anxiously. "You don't know how my heart is set on it. It is not only paying for the harm I've done, but because I've come to think so much of you, too. You are *her* child and *his*, and in all these years I've been drawing near to both of them. It's a fact, Ozro," he said, coming to the young man's side, as if he would have put his hand upon his shoulder, but refraining from doing so with an effort, — "it's a fact, you feel nearer to me than my own kin; because I have thought of you so much,

I suppose. I'm sure your mother would approve."

"I can't talk about it," said Ozro, excitedly.

"I see, I see," said Jackson, mournfully, shaking his head, as he went back and leaned against the mantle. "It is the memory of your father. You think it is blood-money, — a payment which the murderer makes to buy forgiveness for his crime. You can't understand that he has worked with me and helped me to get this property. You think it is stained with his blood, and don't realize that it's *his* money, — the better part of it at least, for I am not entitled to any more than an agent's share."

"Mr. Jackson," said Ozro, turning quickly and going toward him, "I have no such feeling. Your self-condemnation has led you to imagine what does not exist. Will you please read that?"

He opened the letter he had that morning received, handed the other an enclosure yellow with age, on which the stiff bold handwriting stood out with that sallow vividness which makes an old manuscript suggest the dead hand that traced its lines.

Jackson took it, wonderingly; read it with that care which the habits of his later life had engendered, moving his lips as he perused the

words, until he reached the signature. Then he turned back to the date and looked up at Ozro in evident bewilderment.

"Eighteen twenty-four! What does it mean?" he gasped hoarsely, while his hand shook so that the paper rattled in his grasp.

"I received it this morning from Smith & Truman."

"Smith & Truman! *His* bankers! Eighteen twenty-four! Thank God! Thank God!"

The man fell upon his knees, the tears coursing down his cheeks, and burst out in impassioned prayer. Ozro stooped and picked up the paper the other had let fall, and stole quietly from the room. He was both dazed and horrified at what he had heard. It had changed the whole theory of his past. He felt as if he had been suddenly restored to his mother's arms, — his mother, whom he had hardly dared to love. The Inn was now hateful to him. There was something terrible in the misfortunes attending his presence under its roof. He had forgiven, but all sense of gratitude was blotted out. He was sick of the terrible tragedy to the details of which he had listened. Only the memory of his mother, sweet and beautiful, remained. As to his father, — if there was one whom he had

not forgiven, it was the father who had suspected, accused, and cast off his mother. Yet at that very moment that father's nature was dominant in his own. He had put away all thought of Dotty: for him she seemed hardly to exist. He could not pluck her out of his heart, — he did not wish to do that, — but he had irrevocably decided that she was to live henceforth for another, and he did not wish to see or know anything of that life. He felt no anger, — hardly blame, indeed, — but he wished to avoid remembrance of her. He would go to his mother's grave, — he *must* go there now, — and then turn his back on the old life and all its sad memories.

Yes, he would go to the grave. He thought of it at that moment, buried under the snow, — the dark hemlocks bending over it protectingly, the great boulder lying beside it, — this place which had been his playground in youth, and the trysting-place of his love afterward. Here he had dreamed his dreams, planned his undertakings, and mapped out his future. He had a superstitious notion, too, that his mother was nearer to him here than elsewhere, and he loved to think of her as taking an interest in his welfare and watching over his fortunes.

As he started out he met the landlord on the porch, and wondered if this man would be glad or sorry to know of his departure. He saw Louise laying the table for the Christmas dinner as he passed the window, and wondered who would prepare the light ash-wood for the great Dutch oven, in which the weekly baking was done, when he should be gone. As he passed the woodshed, he noticed the abundant store of this household convenience piled within; he thought there was enough to last all winter. Louise had swept a path to the oven, and the ashes scattered on the snow showed that it was in use. He knew that a wild turkey he had shot a few days before was slowly roasting in the great brick arch, flanked by many another dish that would grace the mid-afternoon meal of the Christmas day. Dotty should have laid the table, but she was in such haste to go with Dewstowe that for once she had left it for Louise. He smiled bitterly as he thought of this. Reaching the well, he lowered the bucket hanging on the sweep, dipped it skilfully and brought it steaming to the curb. He balanced the bucket on the edge of the curb, stooped and drank from the brim. As he went on up the hill he was surprised to find that some one had

been before him. Tracks led to the very edge of the "Gulf." Beneath the drooping limbs of the hemlock there were two deep impressions in the snow. Some one that very morning had been kneeling by his mother's grave. With the stranger's story fresh in his mind, Ozro did not question, as he sank down in the snow under the shelter of the dense green boughs, who it was that had been there before him.

A FUTILE QUEST.

DOTTY, in her hasty search for Ozro, the result of which she had reported to Dewstowe, had not thought of seeking him in Mr. Jackson's room. In spite of his long stay at the Inn and his familiarity with its inmates, Mr. Jackson had been quite a recluse in his own apartment. The door of his room was almost always shut, and his voice was so often heard in continuous monologue that it was believed he spent much of his time, when thus secluded, in prayer. This fact made his privacy all the more complete, since none would think of intruding on his devotions. To her mother, just waking to consciousness, everything was "blotted out" by the one idea that her son was alive. Louise, the domestic, could not remember that she had seen Ozro since Dotty and Dewstowe drove away. In reply to the inquiry which Dotty made in the public-room, her father said jocosely, —

"La, no ; I hain't seen the creetur sence mornin'. Like 's any wáy he s 'bout the barn

somewheres. He ain't upstairs," he added, as Dotty went toward the doorway, "'cause the ghost has been there, and everybody in the house has been runnin' up and down stairs this two hours. Come by daylight this time; I seed it as plain's I see you. An' who do you suppose it is?"

"Oh, I have n't time to talk about the ghost," said Dotty, petulantly, "I want Ozro."

"But 'tain't no ghost at all, girl," said her father, gleefully, interposing between her and the door by which she was retreating; "it's your Mă, Dotty — nobody but your Mă!"

"Suppose it is," said the girl, angrily, "could n't you have kept still about it, and not made her the talk of the neighborhood? Poor Mă! she ain't to blame," she added, biting her lip, and trying in vain to choke back the tears.

"More she ain't," said the landlord, in surprise at the absence of any astonishment on Dotty's part, — "more she ain't, an' nobody thought of blamin' her. Of course I was glad to know there was n't any ghost after all; an' the doctor here," pointing to a young man in the company, "he's been in to see her sence, an' he says it's a case of — of what d'ye call it?" he asked, turning to the young man, a recently

graduated medical student, who was making his way westward toward the fortune that awaited all.

"Epilepsy," answered the physician, positively, but with a blush, as Dotty turned her frightened gaze upon him. "A singular case, too, but not necessarily alarming. It is a strange disease; nobody can ever tell its course or guess its end with any certainty. We call it structural in character, but I think it is sometimes functional, — indeed, it must be," he added, as if repelling a doubt. "Coming so late in life, there is little danger to be apprehended, especially as it seems to be irregular in its manifestations. How long has it been since the last attack?" he asked of Dotty.

"Not so very long," said the landlord, answering for her, "but it had been a good while — years, in fact — since the one before that."

"And the recent attacks were apparently brought on by the recurrence to the same subject, — the original exciting cause, I mean?"

"That's it — that's jest it," said the landlord. "The young man's jest come twenty-one, you see, an' that has brought the old matter up, so 't he is likely to make as much trouble at the Inn as his mother did afore him."

"But where is he?" inquired Dotty, recalled to the object of her search by this allusion.

"Did n't I tell you I don't know nothin' 'bout him?" answered her father, irritably. "Rot me, if I don't hope he'll clear out, an' the sooner the better! Did n't he say he was goin' to-morrow? Well, I hope he'll jest date his notion one day ahead, that's all. Not that I've anything ag'in him, but it's bad luck to have him round. All this trouble with yer Mā has been on his account."

"If the exciting cause were removed—" began the young physician, thoughtfully. The case interested him, and he could not help speculating about it.

"That's it—that's jest it," interrupted the landlord. "He's got to leave whether he will or no, and I'm goin' to tell her so."

"That would be very indiscreet," said the medical man, hastily. "She should never be reminded of anything connected with the past which caused her trouble."

"There ain't no help for it, then," said the landlord. "It's got to be part of our lives, jest as much as if it had been born in us. We've got rid of the ghost, but I don't see but the trouble it made is goin' to stay right on."

He shook his head hopelessly as he turned toward his chair and sat down.

"See here, Pă," said Dotty, coaxingly, "don't you be troubled. Don't you get down-hearted, now the worst is over."

"But the worst ain't over," said he, petulantly. "What *is* the worst? Why, it's what come between me an' Lucy, ain't it? Only think," he added with a shudder, "I might have killed her! It's a mercy I did n't — and now I can't even ask her pardon from fear of bringin' it all up ag'in."

"Oh," said Dotty, lightly, "as soon as I can find Ozro, we'll make it all right with Mă. I wonder where he can be?" she added anxiously.

"Jest as like as not he's taken himself off the same way his mother did," said the landlord, grimly.

"Why, Pă!" exclaimed Dotty, white to the lips at this confirmation of her unexpressed fear. She hurried out and made her tearful report to Dewstowe, who was waiting impatiently on the porch. His suggestion comforted, almost as much as his ready acceptance of her fear alarmed, her. She had confidence in his sagacity, and looked up at him with hope as well as gratitude in her glance.

"Don't cry," he said cheerfully, "we shall probably laugh at our fear before we get through with our search. There is nothing to fear."

There really was not; but the belief in the inheritable character of the suicidal mania is so universal that both had leaped to the conclusion that Ozro was especially liable to an attack thereof.

Dotty went to Mr. Jackson's room and knocked. There was no answer. After one or two attempts to attract attention, she opened the door and peeped cautiously in. The stranger was kneeling by his chair, his eyes closed, and his lips moving rapidly, though no sound issued from them. She waited a moment, coughed, spoke his name, but receiving no response, entered hesitantly, and touched him on the shoulder. His eyes opened and he seemed to look at her, but his lips still moved as if his prayer went on.

"Do you know where Ozro is?" she asked apologetically.

"Ozro?" he repeated confusedly. "No—yes; he was here a few moments ago." He rose from his knees as he spoke. "It might have been a half hour or such a matter," he added, looking at his watch.

Dotty rolled her handkerchief into a wad, pulling it over her thumb unconsciously.

"We can't find him — *anywhere!*"

The man was alert now.

"Where is Mr. Dewstowe?" he asked, picking up his hat. "I will see him. Don't be alarmed," he added, as he went out hurriedly.

Dotty crossed to the window and pressed her handkerchief to her eyes with both hands. She kept saying to herself that she would not weep, and then wept all the harder. At length she began to dry her eyes and repress her sobs. She heard Louise in the next room, and did not wish to let her agitation be known. What was she troubled about, anyhow? Why should she be alarmed? It was little compliment to Ozro that she should distrust him so readily. She put her handkerchief in her pocket, and looked out of the window, bravely resolved to have no more fear. The window faced the slope of the hill back of the Inn. She started suddenly, and, leaning forward, looked eagerly at the white hillside. An exclamation of fear and surprise came from her lips. She hurried out of the room and started up the hill.

"Well, I declare!" said the serving-woman, as she paused at her work and saw Dotty taking

the snowy track up the hillside. "What has got into the girl?"

"Oh, Ozro!"

Dotty had climbed the hill and followed the track around the end of the hemlock screen that fell over the grave, and found the object of her search leaning against the great boulder, gazing abstractedly at the snowy mound before him. He started at her words, and she threw herself sobbing upon his neck.

"Why, Dotty, what is the matter?" he asked, in astonishment.

She answered with tears and sobs and half-incoherent words.

"Forgive me, Ozro—forgive me!—I—I did n't—mean—to be—to be—"

Words and sobs were so commingled that he could understand nothing except that she was uttering some remorseful self-accusation. What did it mean? Was she begging him to forgive her for having accepted Dewstowe? He could think of nothing else, and so shaped his consolation on this hypothesis. She was still his old playmate. He loved her no less than before,—though, of course, he must not show his love now. He spoke in soothing careless tones, though all the while he was straining her to

his breast with a clasp that told his love better than words could. She hardly heard his words, but the pressure reassured her. She had found alive the lover whom she feared was dead. She tried to repress her sobs, but it was a long time before she succeeded. All the while Ozro was talking in a low soothing tone, as if he held an excited child.

"There, there, dear," Dotty heard him say, "I don't doubt you have done what was best. He's a good man, and—and I have no doubt he will—will make you—a good husband."

"A good husband! Who?" she asked, looking up in surprise.

"Why, Mr. Dewstowe, of course!"

"Mr. Dewstowe!" indignantly exclaimed Dotty, breaking away from his embrace. Her eyes flashed angrily through her tears, and her heavy brows were drawn down threateningly above them. "Well, he'll have to wait a good while first. That's all I've got to say!"

"Wait—why?" he said in a dazed wondering way. He had settled the whole matter in his mind, and could not doubt the conclusion at which he had arrived.

"Why?" she repeated angrily, stamping her foot in the snow. "Because I'm going to marry *you* first — numbskull!"

Ozro stood an instant stupefied with amazement. Then he staggered toward her, with arms outstretched, only to meet a box on the ear and hear a rippling laugh, as Dotty fled down the hill toward the house. She turned before she had gone a dozen steps, and looked back for the expected pursuit.

She saw Ozro, with his hat off, kneeling in the snow under the hemlocks by his mother's grave. She stood a moment irresolute, and then walked soberly on to the house. As she came out on the porch, Dewstowe and Jackson were just driving out of the barn.

"I have found him!" she called out to them. There was no mistaking the contentment in her tone.

"Dear me!" said Dewstowe, with well-assumed ruefulness, as he reined the horses about and drove back upon the barn-floor, "my hopes are dashed again! Luck must be against me!"

"Well, come in with me," said Jackson, gleefully, "and let's see if we can't change it."

AWAKENED JUSTICE.

WHEN Dewstowe and Jackson entered the house they went directly to the room of the latter, where they talked in low earnest tones, while Louise laid the table in the room without. Presently Dotty came and helped her. She might have heard what they said, for strangely enough the door was open. She wondered what they were talking about that caused Dewstowe to walk back and forth across the room, with his head fallen forward on his breast, unconscious of her presence even when he passed the open door.

Ozro went to the barn and busied himself with the noonday chores. A light cutter drove up from the direction of the village. In it were the sheriff of the county and the attorney whom Ozro had employed to secure his patents. They stopped at the door of the barn and exchanged civilities with Ozro.

"Won't you go in and warm, gentlemen? Dinner will be ready soon."

"We wish to see you a little while," said the attorney, with some embarrassment of manner.

"About your patents, Mr. Evans," said the sheriff, with bluff readiness. "I suppose you've got time to show 'em. It seems they're making some noise in the world."

The men got out of the sleigh, stamped their feet on the barn-floor to start the circulation, and then both helped Ozro to unhitch the horse.

"No use to unharness him. We shall have to return presently," said the owner.

"Not until after dinner?"

"Well, perhaps. Just throw a blanket over him, and he will be all right."

Ozro put the horse in the stall and fed him. Then all three went into the house. The landlord welcomed them heartily, and set a black bottle before them, with glasses and a steaming jug of water. They sat close to the fire that had driven the others back with its heat, their faces growing red while they held up the soles of their boots to the blaze, resting the heel of one on the toe of the other and screening their faces with their hands. The sheriff talked in an off-hand, hearty way, now and then scanning sharply the company in the room. Presently he rose and said,—

"Well, Evans, let us have a look at those machines. We haven't much time."

The landlord urged them to remain to dinner, and they consented. Ozro led the way up the stairs. The sheriff came last, and carefully closed the door behind him. The fire had burned low in the room above. Ozro piled the brands together and put on more wood. Then he showed and explained the machines, the visitors in the mean time watching him more than his handiwork.

"They appear to do the work they were intended for," said the sheriff, finally. "It seems they've heard of them down to York a'ready. I hope you will make a good spec out of them; but you'll have to be sharp, keep your eyes open and get the value of your work,—that's the way. Such a thing depends as much on how it's handled as on what it's really worth."

"Yes," said the attorney, to whom these words were evidently a cue. "I got a letter the other day from some New York bankers making a good many inquiries about you; said they had seen notice of a patent issued to you, and were anxious to learn all they could about you. There it is," he continued, handing Ozro a letter. "No doubt they'll make you an offer,—perhaps send an agent to trade with you. I would n't say anything about the letter if I

were you. To keep from telling what you know is half the battle sometimes."

The letter was signed "Smith & Truman."

"Looks promising, don't it?" said the sheriff, encouragingly, after Ozro had finished its perusal.

Ozro smiled, and asked if he could retain the letter. The attorney assented.

The sheriff looked curiously about the room.

"This is the room your mother died in, isn't it, Evans?"

Ozro nodded assent.

"Thought so. I was a boy then, but came to the inquest. How long ago was it?"

"Eighteen years."

"'Bout this time of year, too, was n't it? I remember it was awful cold."

"She died on Christmas Eve."

"So? Thought I was not mistaken," — with an expressive glance at the lawyer. "This is the ghost-room, then?"

Ozro smiled.

"That story did not keep you out?"

"Nor the ghost either."

"I suppose not: too ethereal to frighten you?"

"No, substantial enough. Gentlemen, I may as well put an end to all that tale of ghostli-

ness. For some months I have known what has been revealed to many to-day, — that the ghost was only a poor woman whose brain was shattered by my mother's sad fate."

"You mean —"

"I mean one who has been all that a mother could be to me; who, believing her husband a criminal, shielded his name from suspicion, while doing all in her power to make reparation for his supposed offence."

"But, how? I thought the only entrance to this room had been nailed up for years."

Ozro went to his work-bench, took up a small iron hook with a cross handle, and returning, stooped over and lifted up the trap-door. The others approached and peered down into the closet below.

"Clambers up the shelves?" asked the officer.

Ozro bowed.

"When?" asked the other, sharply.

"When she is asleep — unconscious — living over again a time of terror."

"I see. Well, shut it up. I don't like to look at it — makes one's flesh crawl. Who have you got at the Inn, now?" carelessly turning away.

"Several strangers staying over Christmas."

"Doing a little better of late, is n't it?"

"Yes, or rather not quite so bad."

"The mortgage has been paid off, I hear."

"Indeed?"

"Did n't know it, eh?"

Ozro shook his head.

"Yes, released, or conveyed rather, to Mrs. Button," said the lawyer.

"Anybody else here?" asked the sheriff.

"Yes; there is Mr. — Jackson," said Ozro, hesitating at the name.

"Mr. Jackson?"

"Yes; Abner Jackson," answered Ozro, flushing at the inquiry. "You know him."

"Tall, black fellow, with hair all over his face?"

"Yes."

"How long has he been here?"

"About four months."

"What's his business?"

"I don't know," said Ozro, smiling. "He says he's doing the Lord's work."

"Does? Awful pious, is n't he?"

"I suppose you would say so."

"Now, see here, Evans," said the officer, shaking off his assumption of indifference, "do you know who this man is? I don't want to

do anything to trouble you or old man Button, either, unnecessarily. I brought Harmon with me because he is your friend, and your attorney too. Now, I'll show you what brought me, and he can advise you and — anybody else that needs advice."

The sheriff thereupon drew some papers from his pocket, and taking two from the bundle handed them to Ozro.

"There are two letters I have lately received. Just read them, if you please. One came from here last night, you see."

The first that Ozro opened was written in a heavy uncultured hand, with peculiar and glaring errors, yet not without a certain sense of force behind it, which often characterizes the chirography of persons of strong but untrained minds. It was directed to the sheriff, and read :—

RESPECTED SIR, — Knowing that you must desire to perform your official duty in good faith, I have the honor to inform you that a man who committed a murder in your county eighteen years ago will be at Button's Inn on Christmas Day next hereafter ensuing. A word to the wise is sufficient.

I have the honor to be,

JOHN GLANCY.

"Who is John Glancy?" asked Ozro.

"Blessed if I know! Nobody ever heard of such a man in this county, and you see he takes precious good care not to let it be known where he may be found. But read the other."

It was addressed, like the former, to the sheriff. Ozro opened it and read:—

SIR,—The day of atonement and retribution is at hand. Eighteen years ago I took a human life in this county. To-morrow you will find me ready to submit myself to the law in reparation for that offence. I shall be at Button's Inn.

By the will of the Lord and by commandment of His Prophet, I have the honor to be

Your obedient servant,

ABNER JACKSON.

"Along with the first letter," said the sheriff, "and as if intended to act as a pointer, I received this."

He handed Ozro an unopened letter, directed to Abner Jackson, Esq., in care of the sheriff.

"That's what brought us here," he said. "Now, what have you got to say about it? What do you know about this man Jackson?"

"He told me his story to-day."

"Who is he?"

“ Jack Button ! ”

“ I suspected as much. And he killed your mother ! I ’m sorry, Evans, — more for you than for him ; but duty is duty. Don’t you think so ? ” turning to the lawyer.

The officer rose from his chair as he spoke, with the air of a man who has a disagreeable task to perform.

“ You are mistaken,” said Ozro. “ He was in love with my mother.”

“ So I have heard,” said the sheriff, nodding corroboratively, but not with any indication of abandoning his purpose.

“ It was my father whom he thought he killed.”

“ Your father ? ”

“ Yes. Though, as I have just proved to him, my father did not die until several years afterward.”

“ And your mother— ”

“ Died of excitement on hearing of his supposed death ! ”

“ You have evidence of this ? ”

Ozro handed him the letter he had received that morning.

The officer glanced it over.

“ It was sent by Smith & Truman,” said Ozro.

“ That would seem to settle it,” said the

sheriff, with a tone of relief. "You are quite satisfied that he had nothing to do with your mother's death?"

"Perfectly."

"He thought your father dead until you showed him this paper?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'm glad it's turned out this way. It's been a bad matter all through, and a mystery no one could quite unravel. I'd like to see the man, though."

"Oh, you'll see him at dinner, and, I take it, hear from him too. It seems he came back just on purpose to give himself up."

"A little — cracked?" said the sheriff, with a gesture toward his head.

"No!" said Ozro, decidedly. "A strong practical man, who has been controlled by a curious delusion."

Ozro then gave his listeners a brief outline of what Jackson had told him a few hours before.

"Poor fellow!" said the lawyer, with genuine sympathy; "how he must have suffered!"

"I remember him," said the sheriff, thoughtfully. "He was a handsome fellow. I'm really sorry for him. So he's Abner Jackson, one of

Joe Smith's apostles ! Well, it runs in the blood. I'm inclined to think religious insanity is just as hereditary as — as any other."

"Ozro !" It was Dotty calling at the foot of the stairs.

PARTITION AND PARTNERSHIP.

ASKING his company to excuse him, Ozro went down. Dotty informed him that Mr. Jackson desired to see them both for a short time. She looked very grave, almost frightened. It was evident that she had learned her relationship to the stranger, though she still referred to him as Mr. Jackson. They went together to his room, — she holding Ozro's hand, as if to cast the responsibility of guidance upon him. They found Dewstowe still in conference with the stranger. The merchant was walking up and down the room with quick decided steps, and a brisk alert look. Mr. Jackson was sitting by the table, which was covered with papers. His hat was off, and there was an air of cheerful anticipation about him which Ozro had never observed before.

"Sit down," he said, with a smile, "and let us have this matter settled." Dewstowe glanced keenly at Ozro, but continued walking back and forth across the room without speaking. They sat down together, Dotty still holding Ozro's hand.

"In view of a contingency not now likely to occur," said Jackson, with a meaning smile, "I recently disposed of my estate. This was done with the idea of making some reparation for a wrong I had committed, and also in acknowledgment of the fact that but for certain influences the property thus distributed would never have been accumulated. You have each been informed of these circumstances as far as is necessary to enable you to understand your own relations to the result. I also desired to avoid any complication in regard to the disposition of my property that might arise from my legal relations, which I then supposed would soon be somewhat peculiar. It seemed to me just and right, under these circumstances, that I should make a disposition of my property, which has in part been carried out, and the papers to complete which are already prepared. I hope that you who are interested will not now balk my wishes by refusing to acquiesce. I can assure you that in the whole matter I have considered your interests rather than my own preferences.

"One third of my estate I have reserved for myself and parents during our natural lives, the same, or the residue thereof, to go after the death of the survivor to the Presidents of the

Church of Latter-Day Saints of Jesus Christ, or the Trustees or Supreme Council of the same, by whatever name the same may come to be designated, for the use of the whole body of the Saints on earth, according to their discretion and judgment. One third I endeavored to divide equally between my sister and Ozro Evans. This portion consists of a plantation with a few slaves in Mississippi, and a part interest in a steamboat on that river. The plantation I have already given by deed to Dotty, and had intended the interest in the boat for Ozro. This he has declined to accept. I hope he has changed his mind," he added with a smile.

"If he has n't, just give it to Dotty," said Dewstowe. "It will be all the same, and a great deal handier if she should want to marry again."

Dotty made a spiteful mouth at the jester, but Ozro replied seriously, —

"I should much prefer to have it so."

"Well," rejoined Jackson, "it will not be difficult to change that. Now we will get on. You will understand that it was at first my intention to make an equal division of all my estate with the son of — with Ozro, I mean. Since I

have come to understand his character and relations to others, it has occurred to me that the interests of all may be better subserved by a further subdivision. I have therefore drawn an agreement by which he and Mr. Dewstowe are to become equal partners in such business enterprises as they may choose to undertake, and have transferred to them, as trustees, the remaining third of my estate, to be used for the benefit of that business."

"In other words," said Dewstowe, sharply, "it is a clear gift to me of one half the amount. That's the bother of it. There is no reason why you should give me anything, and I don't like to accept a mere gratuity."

He bit his lip, with a look of annoyance; yet it was evident that the proposal was not altogether distasteful to him. He saw the advantages which would accrue from the control of added capital, was awake to the opportunities of the time, and appreciated Ozro's mechanical ability; but his Yankee pride revolted from accepting a pecuniary favor.

"I can understand your objection, Mr. Dewstowe," said Jackson gravely; "but the property being my own, have I not a right to dispose of it as I desire? You would have accepted

it as a bequest, and have felt grateful for my remembrance of you on my death-bed."

"That's so," admitted Dewstowe, with a shrug.

"Why require me to die in order to do you a favor?" asked Jackson, shrewdly.

"Sure enough," said Dotty; whereat they all laughed, not because there was anything funny about the remark, but because it was a naïve indorsement of the force of the argument.

"I will not disguise from you the fact, Mr. Dewstowe," said Jackson, "that I should never have thought of this if I had not seen how useful you might be as a partner —"

"If you had only managed to convince Miss Dotty of that," interrupted Dewstowe.

"No, no!" said Jackson, pleasantly; "you young people must settle those things for yourselves. I guess Dotty has chosen rightly."

"I am half-inclined to think so myself," said Dewstowe; "though I felt bad enough about it a little while ago. The fact is, I guess I was made for business instead of sentiment, anyhow."

"That's just it," said Jackson. "The more I know of you, the higher I esteem your personal qualities; but you are, first of all things, a business-man. Unless I greatly mistake, there is a

brilliant career before you. Ozro will be of great advantage to you, and you of infinite benefit to him, — and Dotty should be a help to both. This is a day of great mechanical changes. Steam will revolutionize every form of production. An age of invention has already dawned. To know what to devise and how to render the inventive faculty available is as valuable as the power to invent itself. These elements your practical sagacity and wide experience and observation will furnish. Ozro has the other quality. Such a combination is bound to succeed. So you see I gratify myself doubly, by aiding in your joint success, which I shall always claim as due entirely to my foresight. Now, what do you say?"

There was a moment's silence.

"Well, Evans," said Dewstowe, expectantly, "it is for you to speak first."

He turned and looked sharply at the younger man as he spoke.

"If I can keep up my end," said Ozro, deliberately, "I'll try, — that is, if Dotty has no objection."

"I think it would be the best thing in the world," said the girl, shyly, "if — if you can afford it, brother Jack."

It was the first time she had called him her brother, and the tears sprang to her eyes as she did so.

"Don't be troubled about that," he said, with a smile, though there was something of tremor about his lips; "if I get short I will come and live with you, and so save my cake and eat it too."

Dotty sprang up and threw herself into his arms, as she said, through her tears, —

"You are just the best brother in the world!"

"That settles it," said Dewstowe, wiping his eyes, as he shook Ozro by the hand. Then there was laughter as well as tears, for Jackson said, returning Dotty's embrace, —

"And yet, little Sissie, — that's what I used to call you, — the sheriff is in the house at this moment looking for me. Bring him in, Ozro, and let's have him witness these papers before anything slips out of gear again."

Dotty dried her tears, and rushed off to see if her mother had recovered sufficiently to be told the good news. The sheriff and the attorney came as desired. The necessary alterations were made, and the papers executed, when the sheriff recalled the letter which had been sent in his care for Jackson, and handed it to him.

The latter opened and read it with much show of respect. Handing it to Ozro, he said, with an air of deep reverence,—

“The will of the Lord be done. He is above all prophets and priests. He hath led me by His right hand, and I have done according to His will, even when I knew not what I did. What is done may not be undone. The Lord will care for His people.”

SAINTS AND SINNERS.

THE letter was from an eminent dignitary of the Mormon Church. It read:—

MY DEAR BROTHER AND COADJUTOR IN THE WORK OF
THE LORD:—

All your brethren in the Apostleship and in the Church send cheer and greeting unto thee in respect of the trials and tribulations which the Spirit, through His blessed Messenger, hath foretold by the mouth of His Holy Prophet should happen unto you about this time. “Blessed are ye when men shall persecute you for my sake,” said Jesus of Nazareth; and what was true in that day is not less true in the day of Joseph Smith, the chosen Prophet of the Lord, whom He hath called to be the head of the reformed and redeemed Church of Latter-Day Saints.

Remember, my brother, that thy brief sufferings, which are but for a season, will redound to the everlasting glory of that New Dispensation so mysteriously revealed through the will and power of Almighty God. Seeing thy courage, thy truth, and thy unconquerable resolution to make atonement for thy fault, the shame will be taken away from the New Zion; men will marvel at thy constancy, and believe in the faith by which thou art inspired to good works. Thy name

will be handed down to endless ages with that of the proto-martyr Stephen, and like him thy blood shall be the seed of the New Church, the vindication of the new and purified Gospel. Be of good cheer, therefore, and may God give thee grace to endure all in His name, and send His holy angel to bring thee from the martyr's cross to the throne that awaits the first blood-atoning witness in the New Jerusalem.

All the brethren pray for thee ; and when thy hour of final trial comes, you may have assurance that every Saint is bowed before the Lord, asking His presence with thee, to make thy burden easy, and the darkness light about thee.

My dear brother, I am moved to speak privately to thee on mine own account. The Prophet hath received commandment respecting thee, but being still of the flesh he wavereth and hesitates to give it words. I know not what it may be, but I do know that the Prophet is sorely troubled because of it, and hath been for many days greatly depressed. Because of this I have cast about in my mind, and verily believe I have discovered the reason of his sorrow and discomfiture.

Thou knowest, my brother, that the Church of God is sore pressed for that of which thou hast abundance. It is true thou hast given already with a lavish hand ; but let me ask thee, my brother, if, instead of leaving that substance, with which God hath blessed thee, for thy kindred to snarl and quarrel over, and lest thou be tempted to escape the pains of thy glorious atonement by using it to blind the eyes of justice and

enlarge the meshes of the law, it were not better that thou shouldst give it complete and entire, a worthy and acceptable sacrifice, to the Church of God on earth? Thou knowest the throes which the Church now suffers. Thou knowest how the ungodly abound in subtle devices to work her ill. Doth not thy own soul's safety, the glory of thy martyrdom, and the good of the whole body of the Saints on earth demand that thou shouldst do this before Satan tempt thee, and the flesh grows weak?

I opine, my dear brother, that the Spirit commanded the Prophet to have this thing done before thou didst go out from among us, and that he hath been much tormented because of his disobedience. Being the eldest of thy brethren in the Apostleship, I make bold to call these things to thy mind, and trust the Lord will guide thy feet in the way of wisdom whilst thou livest, and bring thee up through thy great tribulation to be the eternally glorified first witness of His truth. Remember the Church is in sore straits for that earthly substance which can be to thee hereafter only a temptation and a snare. The Lord keep thee.
Amen.

When Ozro had read the letter aloud by his direction, Jackson said :—

“I would not wilfully disobey the commandment of the head of the Church, or the advice of my brethren in the Apostleship. But in this thing which I have done I see the Lord's hand,

and have followed His leading. The flesh is weak, but God knoweth all things even from the beginning."

The name which was signed to this letter has since become renowned throughout the world, — for sanctity among them that believe in him, and for sagacity and power among all men.

"Let me see it!" said the sheriff, quickly. He took the other letter from his pocket, and compared the handwriting carefully.

"Mr. Jackson, don't you think both these letters were written by the same hand?"

Jackson took them, looked at them carefully, and said calmly: —

"They are very like."

"Like! The handwriting is precisely the same in both!"

"Possibly."

"Well, I vow, you take it coolly! Don't you see they tried to have you hanged in order to get hold of your property?"

"The Lord rules and overrules," said Jackson, with a reverential upward look.

"I don't see how you can believe in these men, or the religion they profess, after that," said the sheriff, indignantly.

"Shall I doubt the Almighty because of the

weakness of His servant?" said Jackson, solemnly. "Who was he who wrote upon the ground, 'Let him that is without fault cast the first stone'? Are the priests and ministers of your faith, — are they who despise and persecute the Saints of God because they dare to believe His word, — are *they* without fault? Nay, I will not even admit your insinuation. My brethren no doubt feared that my strength might fail, and they desire above all things that the Church may be purged from stain. Of course they know the needs of the Church, and do not know how the Lord has directed me since I came here. I would have given my life willingly to atone for a crime I thought I had committed, because the faith I have espoused requires atonement for wrong; and I have a right to ask that the motives of my brethren be not impugned."

"There is something in that, sir," answered the sheriff, with respectful seriousness; "but I tell you what, I shall be careful how I allow any of the bills of the 'Kirtland Bank' to be shoved on me hereafter!"

"And you will do well," said the apostle, earnestly. "The Prophet erred grievously when he gave that institution the sanction of his name. Pride, and not humility, was at the bottom of the

impulse he mistook for revelation. Shame and woe will certainly come to God's people because of it. But He knoweth best. After the deliverance from Egypt came the forty years in the wilderness. The errors of God's servants cast no shadow on His truth."

"You evidently accept the faith without much confidence in the Prophet," said the sheriff, with a smile.

"Why should I not?" answered Jackson. "I would not give countenance to any of the slanderous reports that have been spread abroad in regard to the Prophet's life; but we should remember that it is not necessary, even if it were possible, that a prophet should be a spotless being. Look at the lives of Moses and Jacob and David for an answer to such foolish criticism. The prophet is merely the mouthpiece of the Almighty. He is like the pipe that brings water from a fountain, — it may be laid in mire, but the beasts of the earth drink the precious drops it brings, and live. For only one has such a thing as perfect purity been claimed, and to him a divine origin is attributed. It is not the Prophet to whom our faith is given, but to the Divine Mind which he but interprets for us. I believe in the New Dispensation simply be-

cause it seems to me in conformity with truth, and healthful in its influences upon human life. The believer may be mistaken, or the prophet may be insincere ; it matters little, so long as it is God in whom we believe, and not man."

"Well," said the other, "I think I'll stick to the old way for a while, anyhow."

"What do you call the 'old way' ? Will you go to the Church of Rome, or back to Judaism ? Protestantism itself is a new faith, and the Church of the Saints is only its youngest branch. Did it never strike you as a singular fact that all our people are Protestants, or come out of Protestant peoples ? I do not think there is one among us who was a Roman Catholic, nor have I ever known a Jewish convert. You claim Protestantism to be better than the old faiths : why should not Mormonism be better than Protestantism ?"

"I cannot argue with you, Mr. Jackson," said the sheriff, shaking his head good-naturedly. "I'm not very strong on religion, anyhow ; but Mormonism will have to show better fruits than it has yet produced, to command my approval. You have a right to cite your conduct in its favor ; but do you know I think your action is due more to your character than to your faith.

You would have done what you have, had you never seen the Temple, or heard the voice of the Prophet."

"It may be, it may be," said the apostle, with a troubled look ; " God alone knoweth the heart ! "

The solemnity of his words impressed his hearers deeply, and a long silence followed. Dotty stole out and resumed the work of assisting Louise in preparing the dinner. After a while her mother came, very pale and very weak, and helped her languidly. They talked in low tones as they moved back and forth around the table, glancing often at the open door of the room of the son and brother whose new name was more familiar to their lips than the one he had first borne.

SOUL SCOT.

“ I SUPPOSE the old Inn will be given up now ? ” said the sheriff, breaking the silence at last.

“ There is but one thing more, and then my work here will be done,” said Jackson, looking dreamily at Ozro.

The young man’s face flushed under the inquiring glances that were directed towards him.

“ I suppose, Evans,” said the sheriff, jocularly, “ that we can hardly count on you to put the old Inn in repair, and restore its former glory.”

“ I think not,” answered Ozro ; “ in fact, I am afraid I shall have to adhere to my intention and leave here to-morrow.”

“ What — now ? ” asked Dewstowe, with a comical grimace. “ Don’t think of it, partner. There is no need for such haste. I ’ll go back and wind up the old business, hunt up a stand for the new, and get a shingle painted, ‘ Dewstowe & Evans,’ you know, — so that you won’t lose your way when you come to the city to look for me. Stay here till summer ; that ’s soon enough to

begin the new enterprise. You know we have yet to decide what we'll do, and where we'll do it. I don't think the former will be hard to determine, but the latter will stand a deal of thinking about. I may as well do the scouting before you come on. You'd better stay here and help the 'Apostle,' for I judge the job he refers to could n't well be done without you."

"I was about to consult you in regard to this matter," said Ozro, smiling at Dewstowe's jest, but addressing himself to the attorney, and handing him a paper. "Will you read this, and advise me what ought to be done?"

The letter Ozro had received was from a New York banker, who was one of the executors of his father's will, a copy of which was enclosed. A notice of Ozro's invention had fallen under the banker's eye, and the inquiries he had made of the lawyer were the results. The reply the attorney had made satisfied him of Ozro's identity. The will was a singular instrument, but quite in character with the rôle its author had played in the little drama of the hillside hostel. It was duly proved and certified under the seal of a State then but recently admitted to the Union. At Ozro's request the lawyer read aloud the substantive parts as follows:—

"I George Evans, of the town of —, county of —, in the territory of Michigan, being of sound and disposing mind, do hereby make and publish this my last will and testament, in the words and figures following, to wit : —

"*Item.* I omit the usual invocation to the Supreme Being, because of doubt as to whether such a being exists. Until past middle life I served God faithfully according to my lights. To this I attribute all the sorrow I have experienced, and nearly all I have caused others to suffer. If there is a God, He has not shown himself a just God to me, having given me none of those things promised to those who serve Him, except earthly possessions, which I think due to my own foresight rather than to His favor, since I have observed that this blessing is granted most abundantly to those who least desire to serve Him. I therefore feel at liberty to dispose of my acquisitions without asking guidance or direction from Him.

"*Item.* I will that my body, which has served me faithfully, be decently interred ; and I direct that ten of my townsmen, to be selected from the list I shall leave, be requested to act as pall-bearers, and be paid one hundred dollars each for their services out of the moneys in hand at my decease. I desire that they wear white gloves, white hats, white waistcoats, and cravats, and blue broadcloth coats ; all to be provided by my executors out of the first funds coming to their hands.

"*Item.* I give and bequeath all my estate, both real and personal, to my son Ozro Evans, the son also of

my wife Matilda E. Evans, on the following conditions : (1) That within six months after coming of age he shall claim said inheritance of my executors, and furnish proof of his identity. (2) That he shall be able to earn a livelihood by his own exertions, and shall have shown a reasonable inclination to do so. (3) That if not already married, he shall, within the time limited, marry a woman about his own age, of good family and repute, with whom he has been acquainted for ten years, and who has never been affianced to another.

" Item. In case of the failure of my said son to claim this bequest within the time limited, or to comply with the conditions above specified, I give and bequeath my entire estate to the trustees of the town of —, where I now reside, the income to be used by them in paying the expenses of needy and deserving boys, to be selected by competition from the schools of the town, at any college they may choose in this State ; the fund thus advanced to each being accounted a loan, to be paid back in ten equal annual instalments, to be added to the fund, in order to teach them that he who receives favor should not forget to do kindness to others.

" Item. I forbid my executors to make any advertisement, search, or inquiry for my said son until the tenth day of September, 1839, at which time he will come of age. I do this simply to afford a practical test of a religious theory. For more than forty years of my life I believed in an all-wise, all-merciful, and all-just God, and dedicated myself to

His service. My wife, who did not share my religious views, rebelled against the restraints my conscience compelled me to lay upon her. We separated, but I never ceased to love her. My harshness no doubt wrought her death. If I was wrong, — as I feel that I must have been, — no suffering can atone for my error. I have neglected her child, because I felt how futile it would be to attempt reparation for the wrong done his mother. Of course, if there is a just God, He will see to it that the inheritance comes to the hands of the rightful heir, and so my doubt may serve to confirm the faith of others. For myself, I have neither faith nor hope. I should prefer to believe, even now, but see nothing in my life to justify belief. It would be folly to pretend any great affection for the son whom I have thus neglected, but I can fairly say that I hope he will have a happier life than mine has been.

“I forgive all those who have done me wrong, not as I hope to be forgiven, but whether forgiven or not. I have no fear of death. Though I have never sought to do evil, I feel that the world would have been better if I had never been born into it.”¹

“Well, that *is* a will,” said Dewstowe, with a low whistle. “What kind of a man was this father of yours, anyhow?”

“Do not blame him,” said Jackson, solemnly. “This is but the cry of his bitterness. ‘My

¹ Members of the legal profession who are familiar with testamentary literature will have no difficulty in tracing this instrument.

God! why hast thou forsaken me?' cried the Nazarene in his agony. Out of the good your father sought to do had come the most terrible evil. He felt that he had doubly slain her whom he loved, — once with suspicion, and once with harsh judgment. No wonder he doubted, when what he counted duty brought such bitter consequences. Yet he did not do evil, nor wish evil to his fellows, and at the last trusted the God he thought he had renounced.

"He was a victim," continued Jackson, "of a religious faith which developed to a dangerous degree the idea of universal conformity to inflexible ideals. What had become a second nature to him was only a slower death to the gentle woman whom he loved. He was willing to do murder in God's name; and the jealous fervor of his nature prevented him from seeing his act in its true light until its terrible result overwhelmed his hope. He was simply a product of that good which, when rooted in human nature, quickly deteriorates and soon yields evil fruits."

"In other words," said the matter-of-fact Dewstowe, "he was a sort of righteous sinner?"

There was a ripple of laughter at the humorous combination, which was checked when Jack-

son said with reverent inclination: "Ay, one of those in whom God alone can tell where sinfulness ends and righteousness begins."

Ozro tearfully extended his hand to the strange religionist whose faith nothing could daunt, and whose charity was measured by an unfailing sense of his own unworthiness, who grasped it warmly.

"Well," said the lawyer, who had gotten out his pencil and made some figures which he had been carefully considering, "whatever may be the truth about his religious views, your father has left a remarkably clear will, and one the provisions of which must be literally complied with. You have just sixty-nine days in which to get married and prove yourself his son. This proof may have to be made both in New York, where one of the executors resides, and also in Michigan, where the will is recorded; so I should say that there is not a moment to lose."

"Why not have the wedding to-night?" suggested the sheriff.

"Capital!" said Dewstowe. "And I will leave my load here, and we will make the trip to New York on our own runners. The bays will do it quicker than the stage."

"The lady?" inquired the lawyer, who was studying the will. "She —"

"I will answer for her," said Jackson, with dignity.

"She has never been engaged to another?" continued the lawyer, glancing keenly at Dew-stowe.

"There it is again," said the merchant, with assumed dolorousness. "My luck is certainly deserting me! Now, if I'd just had a bit of understanding with her, Evans, your cake would be dough. But, no, I did n't. It was n't my fault, but your good fortune — or perhaps her good sense."

A WEAVER'S KNOT.

SO the Christmas merry-making at Button's Inn became a wedding. Dewstowe was best man and master of ceremonies. The gray-haired landlady, her heart filled with a solemn joy, gave ceaseless thanks for mercies all the more precious because unexpected. The burden of sorrow lifted, the son, whom she had mourned as worse than dead, restored; the stain which she had believed to rest on their good name, removed; and Dotty and Ozro united, — these were more than she had hoped, and all that she could desire.

"'T ain't nateral, 't ain't nateral," said the landlord to Dewstowe, as he sat before the fire in the public-room, with the great punch-bowl beside him, "that a man should be exactly sober when things have turned out so well after runnin' ag'in him so long; but I am, you see. The fact is, I feel kind of solemn-like; and while I'm glad to see the neighbors enjoyin' themselves, I jest can't bear to put a glass to my lips. Seems as if I ought to be prayin'

instead of carousin'. That's the way of life. It don't matter how careful a man may be, before he gits to the end he's sure to find out he's been a fool. The chief difference, I take it, is that some find it out sooner'n others. I never was much else, and discover it too late to be anythin' better. It don't seem nateral that things should come so, but I'spect it's about right. When you come to think on 't, it seems that the things that ain't nateral happens about as often, if not a little oftener, than them that are. 'T was n't nateral, now I look at it, for me to take a spite ag'in Ozro and prefer you; but I did. 'T was n't nateral for Dotty to like a poor feller such as he better'n one that was enterprisin' and fore-handed like you; but she did, an' it seems she was n't so fur wrong arter all. Some folks never try to set things right without gettin' of 'em wrong. I'm one o' that kind. That man Evans seems to have been another. Poor fellow! I can't help thinkin' he got hold of the worst end of the trouble he made. Fer me, I ain't goin' to try to guess nor understand nothin' 'bout things — how they're goin' to be or ought to be — any more; an' I don't b'leve Lucy will, either. What comes, that I'm goin' to take, and not fret about what

tomorrer's goin' to bring or yesterday failed to furnish. But I don't want no more liquor — never — not another drop. Life's too solemn a thing to git through with unless one has all the wits he's got about him — 'specially when he gits to my time."

Three months afterward the Bank of Kirtland failed, and the exodus began, which ended only at Salt Lake. Abner Jackson stood firm in the faith he had espoused. Even when his cousin Sidney Rigdon gave way and recanted the testimonies he had given, Jackson did not falter. Though he was never degraded from his apostleship, he ceased to be a favorite of the Prophet and his sagacious and renowned successor, when it was learned that only an insignificant portion of his splendid estate would come under the control of the authorities of the Church. When he returned to "the place where the Ark of the New Dispensation first rested," Jackson took with him his aged father and mother. When the bank failed, and the wrath of the people burned hot against Joe Smith and his followers, Jackson was the first to propose their migration to the South; and the attempt to "build the walls of Zion" at Far West was in a great measure

due to his influence. Here the old landlord succumbed to the climate. He was never a very ardent believer in the New Faith. "It suits Lucy, and of course it suits me," was a fair and oft-repeated statement of his religious status. The wife, who out-lived him, saw the brief but splendid "Empire of the Faithful" at Nauvoo, and was the first one stricken by the bullets of their assailants before the treacherous murder of the Prophet. So that her name, instead of that of her son, stands as the proto-martyr in the sanctified necrology of the Saints.

Abner Jackson alone of all the apostles disapproved of the Order of the Danites, which was organized especially to uphold the power of the Prophet at all hazards, and was the boldest of all the believers in rebuking the profligacy and iniquity of him whose name was "written in the book of gold" as "the Prophet of the Lord, worthy of all honor and power and dominion and obedience, even unto death." His faith in the new doctrines never wavered; he did not question the truth of the new revelation, yet did not hesitate to reprove the sins of the Prophet. His long black beard and jetty hair, with the lock of silvery white stretching from brow to crown, made him a striking figure, and he was one who

could neither be awed by threats nor conciliated by promises. The triple-headed presidency used him as far as they could, taking care never to drive him into actual revolt. They bore with his reproaches and hid from him, as far as possible, their enormities. To the mass of believers he was the most sanctified of the Saints. Unselfish, fearless, and upright, he was the real leader of the great march over the desert wilderness to the Promised Land. He rebuked the malecontents, cheered the fainting, helped the weary, soothed the dying, and closed the eyes of the dead. He did not live to see the "New Jerusalem of God on earth," or witness the glory of the "chosen people" in their Promised Land; but from a Pisgah height he looked down upon the sparkling sea, by whose waters the Temple stands to-day, before at last he rendered up his soul. The rulers of the New Zion were not sorry, but the people mourned his loss. He was buried in the mountains, and like him who died in Moab, "no man knoweth his sepulchre unto this day."

THE WORLDS' MUTATION.

THE epoch of the locomotive had come. Steam and electricity had joined hands for the annihilation of time and space. Mechanical genius had burst the bonds by which it had been so long confined, and the earth was full of the ceaseless clamor of newly invented forms. The gnomes of Labor crowded mountain and cavern and land and sea in restless, sooty multitudes. The night was as the day. The iron horse flashed through the frightened land, heedless of storm and darkness. The age of wonders had dawned. The mountains were levelled with the plain in search for the golden grains they hid. Primeval rocks were crumbled into dust for the sake of the snowy drops that nestled in their veinings. "The uttermost parts of the earth" became as next-door neighbors. Thought outsped the sunshine, and the silent message flew faster than the storm it heralded. Moments did the work of years, and the lightning mocked at the laggard spheres. The great marts of earth

became as one. The world was radial throughout its whole extent, each point touching at once the centre and the circumference.

In a sunny room overlooking one of the great hives of industry stood Ozro, strengthened yet refined; Dewstowe, grown full and sleek, but yet alert and resolute; and Dotty, sober and matronly, but not less fair. Along the crowded river-bank the red fires leaped from the furnace-doors. The smoky vapor rose in black fleecy folds above the towering chimney-top. The clang of mighty engines jarred the solid walls. On the mantel was the model of a machine for heading pins, done in silver and ebony, and set in a glass case. The two men leaned against the mantel, inspecting the model. Dotty stood beside an easy-chair in the middle of the room, regarding them with quiet satisfaction.

"Not much of a machine," said Ozro, smiling. "I wanted to make her a model of one of my latest inventions for her birthday, but she would have no other."

"And I was right, — was I not, Mr. Dewstowe?"

"Entirely right, madam," answered Dewstowe, bowing graciously, and stroking his long beard meditatively. "It is a wonderful

machine! It has made 'Dewstowe & Evans' famous wherever a wheel turns on an iron rail, built up a city, made half-a-dozen fortunes, and — kept me a bachelor!"

"Don't be too sure about the last," said the lady, with an arch smile, as she came and leaned against her husband's arm and gave her hand to his friend.

"Strange, is n't it?" she said dreamily, as she looked out of the plate-glass window, past the smoke-stacks and the forges, — past the bustling city half a thousand miles away, to the crumbling Inn by the quiet country roadside.

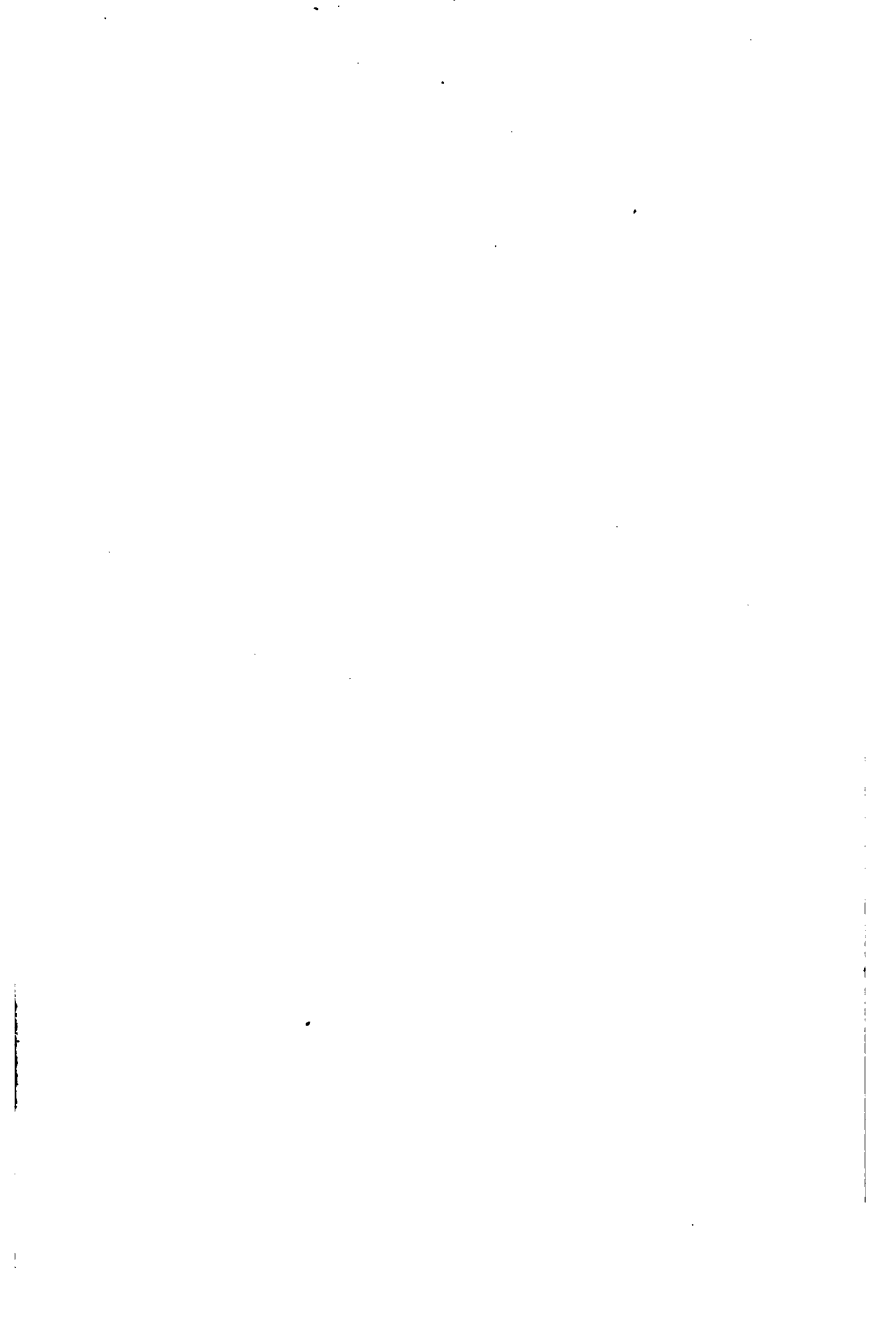
"'T ain't nat'ral, is it?" said Dewstowe, with a touch of his old-time mimicry.

"It is only part of a universal miracle," said Ozro, solemnly, "of which we have seen but the beginning, and of which no man can foretell the end."

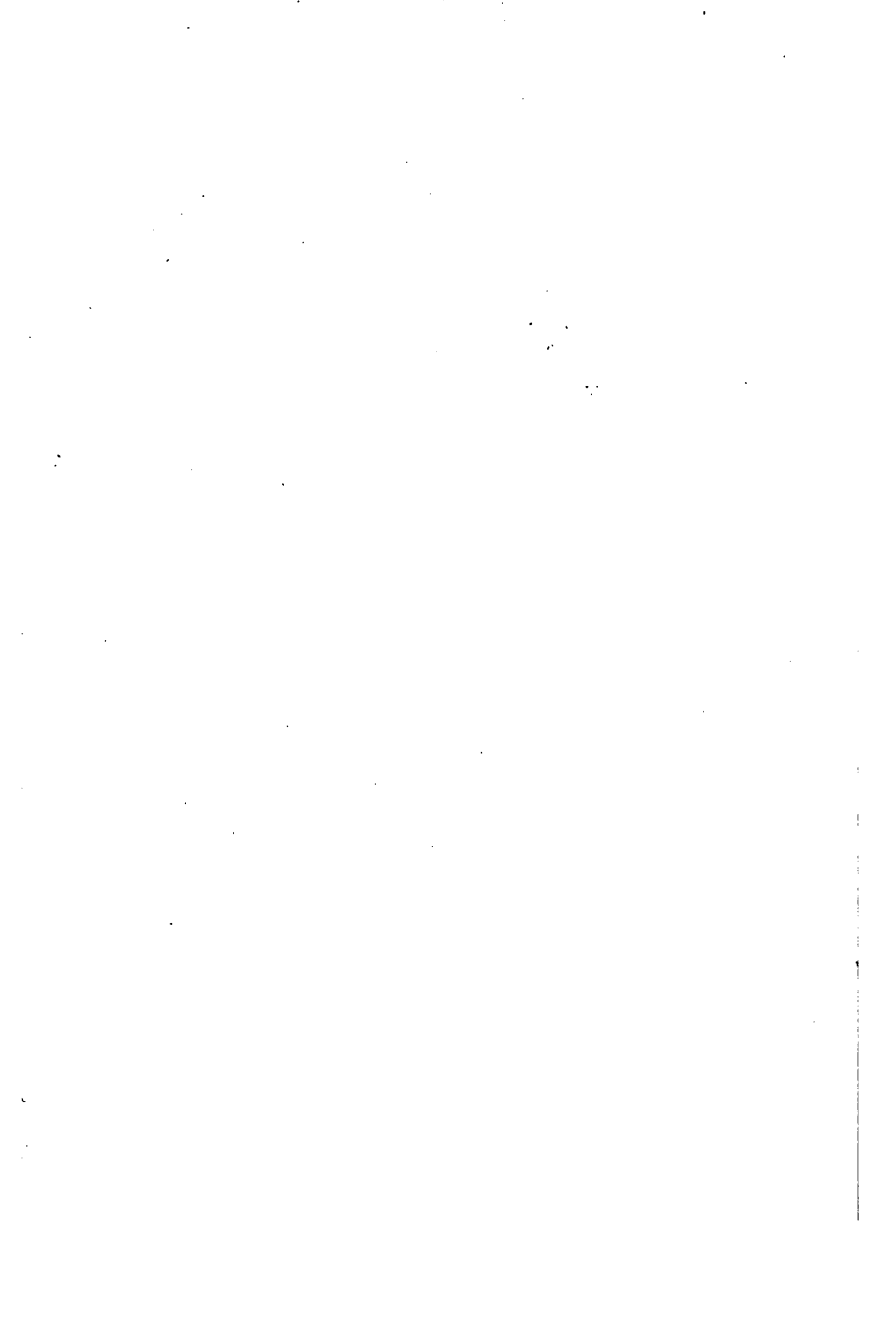
.

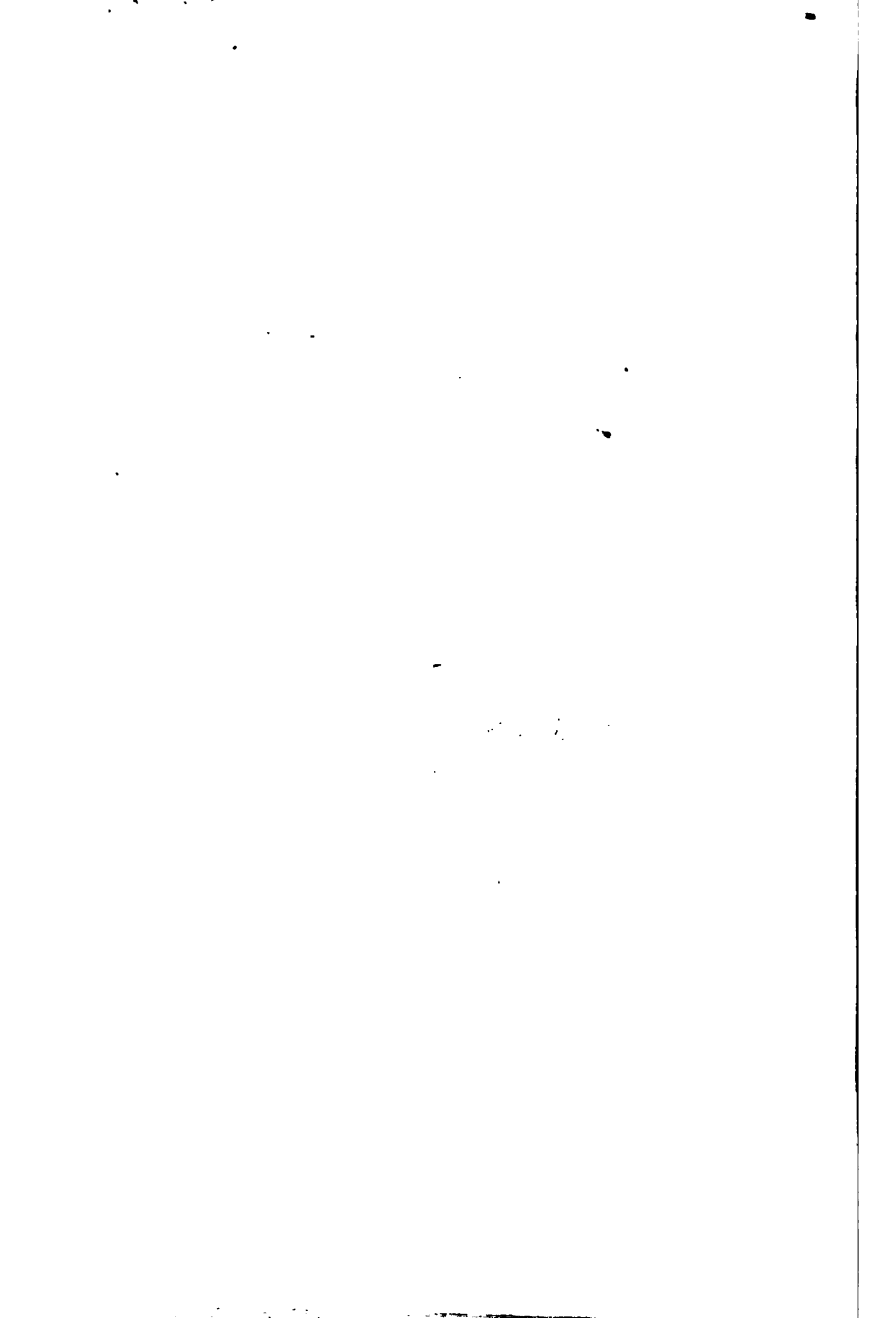
The Inn has fallen to decay. The road that led by its door is grass-grown with disuse, The scream of the locomotive sounds mockingly among the crumbling rafters. The forests are cut away, and villages smile up at it across the slope in the sunshine. The Prophet's few

hundred followers have grown to nearly half a million. The miracle we have witnessed has become so familiar to our eyes that we mock at it as commonplace, and assert that pettiness alone is truth, and declare that real life is concerned only with multitudinous trivialities, discoverable only by elaborate processes of morbid self-dissection.





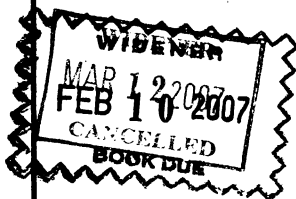




WIDENER LIBRARY

Harvard College, Cambridge, MA 02138: (617) 495-2413

If the item is recalled, the borrower will be notified of the need for an earlier return. (Non-receipt of overdue notices does not exempt the borrower from overdue fines.)



Thank you for help

Collection!

AL 3664.5.22

Button's inn.

Widener Library

006748732



3 2044 080 929 771